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EPH PETERS;

OR

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BY W. J. HAMILTON,

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EPH PETERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAG IN THE FOREST.

Our story opens upon the southern bank of the Mohawk not far from where the city of Schenectady now stands, in the year 1755. At this early period, with the exception of the few scattering forts, this region was in the hands of the Indians. Yet it was neutral ground, and the French made their incursions from the north to this place. Only a few hardy pioneers, of the same stock which landed at Plymouth, and the hardy Dutchmen, made their way further up, and settled upon the banks of the Mohawk, far out of the reach of the guns of Fort Albany.

The country was claimed and owned by the Mohawks, the fiercest of that famous confederacy known as the Six Nations, which embraced not only the Six Nations proper, consisting of the Oneidas, Cayugas, Senecas, Onondagas and Tuscaroras, but many smaller and comparatively weaker tribes in Massachusetts and other States.

The confederacy, always an arrogant and usurping power, took up the cause of England at an early period and remained their firm allies. Lying as they did, they formed a strong barrier against the encroachments of the French, and could raise a large army of savage warriors if required.

The French have been blamed, and somewhat justly, for the manner in which they carried on the war against the English colonists. But at this time, their conduct, though barbarous, was more than paralleled by the English, in the cold-blooded depopulation of the province of Acadie. Hundreds of families were separated forever, and carried to an inhospitable region, leaving their pleasant fields in the hands of their conquerors.

On the morning of the twenty-first of August, 1755, an old woman was walking on the bank of the Mohawk. She was small in stature, and was still further dwarfed by a bad stoop. She walked with a staff, stooping from time to time to gather herbs, which she put in a sort of pouch at her side as she took them up. A physiognomist would have said at once that the woman had a bad face. Her nose was hooked like a vulture's beak; and there was a certain rapacious quickness in her eye which did not bode good. She moved about with marvelous swiftness, for one apparently so decrepit, muttering to herself at intervals as she continued her work.

A footstep in the woods startled her, and she sprang behind a bunch of tall weeds, which completely concealed her from view. But she had evidently been seen, and a cheery voice called out:

"It won't do, Mother Ann. You will have to jump quicker than that if you expect to escape the red-skins."

An active young fellow, evidently the owner of the voice, issued from the woods, presenting a lithe, compact form, though not large, clad in the uniform of the regiment of Colonel Williams. He carried a musket, slung across his shoulder, and looked somewhat jaded by a long march. The face was a good one, open and fearless. He laughed pleasantly as the person called Mother Ann came from her place of concealment, scowling at him angrily.

"You have lost none of your beauty, good mother," he said. "Why will you persist in turning milk sour by such thunder-storm looks?"

"Do you tramp the forest still, then, Ronald Mannering?" she said. "Have you not learned that long tongue of yours better manners since I saw you last?"

"Not at all, good mother. You were pleased to reprimand me somewhat sharply when we last met—why I can not tell—and commanded me not to cross your path again. All that is nonsense. The paths in the woods are free, and you have no power to bar them against me."

The old woman's eyes blazed. She took a single step toward him, and lifted a skinny finger. He dropped the butt of his gun indolently upon the ground, and leaned upon it. The bent figure of the crone seemed to expand and grow taller, as

she saw his carelessness. She had acquired a strange reputation upon the frontier, which had kept her safe from any of the hostile parties. She was known as a witch, who had great power for evil when she chose to exercise it. The Indians thought her a "Great Medicine," and she had been kinder to them than to her white brothers.

"Little you know," she half screamed, "of the power of Ann Wylde. Little you know, Ronald Mannering. I tell you that I know that which would blister your heart to hear. I have secrets which would make you a sleepless man, and send you out into the woods for a purpose. *You* keep to the forest, forsooth, after I have bade you leave it! *You* come and go at your will, when I bade you *not*. Harken to me, Ronald. Once more I charge you, go back! There is nothing here for you. I hate your father, and I hate your race. I hate your baby-faced mother worst of all!"

"My mother! The meekest, gentlest lady in the Colonies! Ann Wylde, you are mad!"

"Ay, ay, so you say. But the word is still the same. I know why you are here to-day; but it can not be. Margaret Wylde is not for you."

The young man flushed quickly and said:

"You shame my gallantry. You were so entertaining that I have not asked for the health of mistress Margaret. How is she now?"

"Mistress Margaret is well, though somewhat too much on your tongue. Why should you trouble yourself for her? I have said, she is not for you. Turn about, and tramp on your way in the woods, and never again see or speak of Margaret Wylde."

"By my faith," cried he, growing angry, "but you are wondrous unkind. Small cause I have given you to be so, I am sure. But that I should go on without meeting mistress Margaret, can hardly be, since I have turned somewhat out of my course to meet her."

"It may not be," persisted the crone. "Come as far as you may, go ye back as you came, for you can not see Margaret."

"And why?"

"Have I not told you why? Is it not enough for you

without asking more, to know that I hate you and all your kin? Why do you ask for more?"

"It will not suffice," said he, sharply, "for though you may hate us, as you say, yet do I not believe that Margaret Wyldé hates us as well. If she does, I must hear it from her own lips, and not from yours."

"What would it matter if she even loved you—impossible as that may seem—so that I refuse to admit you? Curses on you—will nothing drive you away? Do you wish to make me mad?"

"Madder you can not be," said he, angrily. "And I tell you that I will not be the slave of your caprice, or its victim. You waste no love on me, I can see. That you have no reason for it, I know, for I never did you a wrong, and you reviled me the first time we met. I have tramped all the way from the fatal field of Braddock to this spot, and turned miles away from my course, to see Margaret. Woman, I love her."

"You came from Braddock field. Ha! ha! Ah, that is a glorious field. There the proud were laid low—the haughty men, who have oppressed my poor people. Ah!"

She stopped suddenly, for the young man had come close to her and laid a finger on her arm.

"In spite of your English name, Mother Ann, you have French blood in your veins."

"French! yes—a thousand times, yes. There, I boast of it; the purest and best blood in all the earth. Come, now, Ronald Mannerling, since you will hear it, sit you down, and you shall have my story. I tell it because I hate you all, and you shall see if I have not great cause.

"My blood is not all white. My father was a Frenchman a chevalier of France, and my mother was a Huron. She was an Indian, but she was beautiful. I remember her well, though she died when I was quite young. It will not brighten your hopes to know that a tide of unforgetting Indian blood flows in my veins.

"My father came to live in New York, after my mother died, on some mission to the English. He died there, poor, and a wealthy family took me under its care. I was not crooked then, as I am now; nor should I be so to-day, did not

sorrow weigh me down. Whether I was beautiful or not, I leave to your father to say, for he was the son of the man who adopted me as his child.

"I loved him; I shame to say it now, but it was so. I loved him as he was a child, I loved him when he became a man—I hate him to-day, bitterly. I curse him from my heart at this hour.

"I think he knew that I loved him, and though he was ind, he gave me nothing to feed the hunger at my heart. And when he met your mother, he forgot me, and married her."

"He never said he loved you?"

"What of that?" she cried, fiercely. "Was my love the less real? He knew that I worshiped him, almost as a saint, and in the face of all, he dared to love another. I tell you, I hate him for it."

"And this is all?"

"When he married I fled away from him, and many years after I married an Englishman, who gave me his name. He is dead, and I have his child to sit at my hearth—to comfort while she is true to me, to hate when she is false. Beware how you tempt her, Ronald Mannering, for my hate would be a fearful thing to her."

"Could you hate your daughter?"

"Could I not? I could hate one who *should* be true to me, and is not, better than one who has no right in law to cling to me. You I only hate because you are of *his* blood, not because you have done any thing to harm me. But if you persist you will. You harm both yourself and her."

"I love her."

"It is vain. She must marry one of my blood—a French man. Have you ever thought what will happen when the French are masters of these Colonies?"

"That will never be."

"You say so; but I tell you it shall. Have you ever heard of the Baron Dieskau?"

"Yes."

"Take the word of one who knows him—he has sworn to possess these Colonies for his sovereign, and he will keep his oath. The man is too gentle. I fear he will forget the

wrongs of poor, forsaken Acadie when he comes to make the settlement. My curse upon the English. Can you defend them in that?"

"Mother Ann, I do not defend that outrage against humanity. I look upon it as an indelible stain upon British honor."

"Driven on board the shipping at the point of the bayonet, through lines of weeping mothers and sweethearts, wives and daughters, to be landed alone on an unknown coast. British honor! Faugh! Is this a sample?"

"Believe me, the Colonies think with you in this. It was wicked, barbarous, cruel! No name can be too hard for it."

"And yet you, one of that cold, crafty, cruel blood, have dared to think of my daughter. Go your way, I tell you once again, for your hope is vain."

He took up his gun, with a sigh of apparent resignation, and bade her good-by. Her eyes gleamed with gratified malice as she saw him depart, in the course from whence he came, and she went on with her herb-gathering, looking from time to time, with a low chuckle, in the direction in which he had disappeared.

"Let him go, the image of his cold-blooded father, who was taken by her baby face, as he is taken by that of my Marguerite. Margaret! I will not have the cold English name. Let him go."

She might not have been so sanguine in regard to his going had she seen his face as he turned away. When at such a distance that she could no longer hear his footsteps, he paused, shook his hand in her direction, and said:

"Do your worst, old crone, I see Maggie to-night!"

Turning sharply to the right, he buried himself in the bushes, and stooping, after the manner of a practiced scout, made a circuit about the spot where she stood, and came back into the path some distance below. Without pausing, he broke into a quick run, which soon brought him in sight of the cabin of Mother Ann. It stood close to the river's edge, and was completely walled in by the mass of vines which the hand of woman had trained to grow about it."

A negro lay upon his back on the open spot before the door, kicking his heels about in lazy enjoyment. He was of short stature, standing only five feet, but well proportioned

Ronald picked up a stick which lay upon the ground and cut him across the shoulders smartly. The negro sprung up with a yell of anger.

"Who da' be, cut Tom wid stick? Oh, Lord! dat you, Marse Ronald? Da', da'; grad to see you, dat I is. But wha' fo' you cut I wi' hick'ry?"

"Where's Maggie?"

"Wha' for want know?"

"Where is she?"

"How I know? S'pose she tell nigga ebery time she go out? Enty she do jus' as she please? Course she am."

Ronald pushed open the door of the cabin and looked in. The interior was not unlike that of other frontier dwellings, but showed in the arrangement of the furniture, simple as it was, a refined and cultivated taste. For in the first days of our glorious Republic, taste was shown as much in domestic affairs as in the parlor.

Glancing around the apartment, his eye sought the object of his visit. But the room was vacant. She whom he looked for was not there, though every article that met his gaze evinced the care of her tasteful hand. Disappointed, he returned to Tom, and, with a dejected air, renewed his inquiries. But Tom was inexorable. He didn't know.

Ronald took a knife out of his belt, and held it up so that the negro could see how finely it was polished.

"Would you like a knife, Tom?"

The mouth of the negro actually watered at the sight of the knife. He would have risked his life, almost, for its possession.

"I tell ole missis dat I no tell you whar' find Miss Maggie, s'pose you come. What ob dat? Did she gib me a knife, s'pose? No, she didn't. Stands to reason, den dat I goes ober to de one as hes got a knife. You gibs me dat knife, Marse Ronald, den maybe I tells you whar' you fin' Miss Maggie."

"Here it is," replied Ronald, at once tossing him the coveted article.

"Dat's you, boy. Now, den, you know whar' to fin' de spring?"

"Yes."

"W'en you fin' de spring, I spects you fin' Miss Maggie, eh?"

"Good for you, Tom. There is some good in you yet. Where are the boys?"

"Out in de field; an' little Dave—dat's my frien', you know—he says—"

But the young man was off like an arrow, leaving the negro with his mouth open, and the unfinished sentence lingering on his tongue. What little Dave said, must always remain a mystery to the end of time.

Ronald knew the way to the spring, and, treading lightly, reached the bushes above it and looked down. The forest-maiden was sitting on the edge of the streamlet, formed by the spring. She had thrown off her moccasins, and was paddling with her bare white feet in the water, and singing a low melody. Ronald shook the branches, and called her name. She sprung up in alarm, and poised herself on her bare feet for flight. He called her name again, and this time she recognized his voice, and stood laughing, as he pushed aside the bushes and came down to her.

Her moccasins lay upon the bank, and he looked at them with a quizzical side-glance, as he took both her hands in his, and raised one of them to his lips, after the courtly manner of the time.

"Keep that for her Majesty," said Maggie. "Intruder, how came you here?"

"I got Tom to tell me where you were, and came down at once."

"But what possible reason can have brought Captain Man-nering, of the Independent Rangers, into the woods, so far from his duty?"

"Don't badger me, Maggie. You know why I am here. Do we not understand each other yet?"

She flushed slightly, and the beautiful face was hidden a moment from his ardent gaze.

"Yes," she said, at last, "you have said you loved me, and I have promised to be your wife, provided you can get my mother's consent, and provided, also, some handsome fellow, with a colonel's commission, does not propose, in the mean time."

"Will you never have done with your badinage, Maggie?" he said, a little reproachfully. "Do you not see that I am in trouble?"

A change came over her face, and she lifted both hands, to place them on his shoulders, in her quiet, earnest way, saying, quickly:

"What is it, Ronald? Tell me."

"I met your mother, before I came in, upon the river-bank. She was very harsh with me, and refused to let me see you. She told me that she hated me and mine, and that what I hoped for could never be."

"Ronald!"

"You know now why I am not quite myself. I determined to tell you. I had been down the river for the General, to communicate with General Braddock. Alas! the General is no more!"

"How is that?"

"He is dead; and more than half of that gallant army, with which he marched so triumphantly out of Cumberland, lie dead four miles from Fort Du Quesne."

"Dead! All lost?"

"All, over in that region. I saw Colonel Washington, of Virginia, a young man who, like myself, has faith in the provincials. He told me, in honor, that he could have saved the day, had his provincials been permitted to go in first, but they were kept in the rear."

"Do you think we shall have fighting upon this border soon?"

"Within two weeks; but I can not talk of that. Have you nothing to say with regard to your mother? How can I move her? She seems so determined, and I fear for the result."

"One thing, dear Ronald. Whatever comes, I shall be true to you, and my promise to you. But we must wait. My mother may change, and learn to honor you for your good qualities, as I do. Be gentle with her; do not suffer her foibles to rouse you to anger. And remember, through all that I love you."

He kissed her passionately.

"Have you long to stay?" she asked.

"No," he replied, "I have snatched a few precious moments from my duty to see you. I bear dispatches from Colonel Washington to General Johnson, who has command of our forces here."

"You expect danger?"

"The French are on the alert. The vile outrage at Acadie has made them half frantic. I am ashamed of my country, that she should countenance such a thing. Our scouts tell us that Baron Dieskau is on the move, with a heavy force. We shall have fighting soon."

A loud cough sounded through the bushes, warning them that some one was approaching. Soon after, a woolly head was thrust into the opening.

"I t'ought I'd tell you, Miss Maggie," said Tom, "not as I s'posed you'd *car'*,—dat your mudder will be home in free, four minutes."

He disappeared with the words. Ronald snatched a kiss, lifted his rifle, and plunged into the bushes. Maggie slowly put on her stockings and moccasins, which had lain unheeded during the interview, and returned to the house, which she reached soon after her mother, whom she found engaged in a loud controversy with poor Tom, who had unwittingly betrayed the visit of Ronald; for, when his mistress approached the house, she found him contemplating, with idolatrous looks, the knife which had tempted him to betray his trust. She at once pounced upon the unlucky individual in question, and snatched the knife from his hand.

"Where did you get this?" she cried.

"Foun' it!" asserted Tom, stoutly, and snatching it back, without ceremony, mistress though she was.

"Where did you find it?"

Tom was good at a lie; but this question confused and tripped him. Forgetting that his mistress had possibly seen the knife in the hands of Ronald, he named a place, unluckily, between the cabin and the spring, where Ronald had held his interview with Maggie.

"He has been here, then; did you see him?"

"See who?" asked Tom, looking innocent.

"Ronald Mannering."

"Marse Ronald?"

"Of course."

"Wha' he be?"

"Have you seen him, I say? Speak, dog, or I will have you flayed alive!"

"Don't car' if you do; I ain't seen him."

The hag knew all the superstitions of the negro.

"True as you live and breathe?" she asked.

"Oh, I won't say *dat*," replied Tom, horrified. "You know I won't say *dat*!"

"Where did you get the knife?"

"Fairies brung it an' dropped it ober dar'."

"True as you live and breathe?"

"Oh, no, I *nebber* say *dat*," answered the black, who imagined that some fearful thing would happen to him if he invoked such testimony; and though he still persevered in the assertion that he had not seen Ronald, she was now quite certain that he had, and turned to meet her daughter with an angry eye.

"Who has been here?" was her first question. "Speak, quick!"

"Captain Mannering," replied Maggie, quietly.

"Have you been with him?" hissed the vindictive old woman. "Do you dare to tell me you have been with him?"

"Why should I not?" said she, quietly. "The captain is my friend."

Her mother looked at the girl some moments without reply. In her rude way, she loved her daughter; but her hate of the English was engrafted in her very blood, bred in her bone, and burst forth on every occasion like the fiery lava of a volcano. It was evident that she only hesitated in order to keep down her anger, for, rude and harsh to every other earthly thing, she was gentle to her only child, and loved her with a certain fierce, untutored passion, such as the tigress might feel for her young. Her old face worked strangely, in the moments she waited, before she trusted her voice to speak.

"Let me understand this fully, Marguerite." She never would give her the English name. "You have met Captain Mannering. Was it an appointment?"

"No, mother."

"How then?"

"He found me. I was at the spring."

The old woman cast a side-glance at Tom, who hid his treasure at once.

"Didn't see him, missee. Nebber see him, missee. Knife drop out ob de sky."

As this assertion was wholly uncalled for, his mistress could hardly help smiling, angry as she was.

"No more of that, Tom. The captain gave you that knife to let him know where Marguerite was, and you told him. Don't lie! I know it."

Tom stood with open mouth and staring eyes, fully convinced that the old dame was a witch. After staring at her some five minutes, he shook his head slowly, and walked away.

"Now that he is gone, Marguerite, attend to what I have to say to you. I have never asked what has passed between yourself and Ronald Mannering. I do not wish to know; I will not know. It is enough for me that it is now at an end. Do not ask me why I say it, but you shall never mix your blood with the false tide that flows in the veins of Mannering. The French in your nature ought, if it does not, cry out against such a union. I hate the name of the English. I do not know why I married your father, unless I was tired of saying no. But *he*, of all his race, was very kind to me."

"But, mother—" Maggie began to say.

"Not a word for him. The time will never come when I can hear patiently a plea for one of that crafty blood. Guy Mannering, the father, and the baby-faced mother I hate most. The boy is not so bad, but it is enough that he drew his life from her breast."

"Why do you hate them? Have you no love for me, mother?"

"For thee?" The lips of the old creature trembled. "Ah, yes, for thee, as for none other, the old heart of Ann Wylde can beat. Yes, child, I love thee, and for thy sake would do much. but this, I swear, shall never be."

She turned resolutely away, refusing to converse longer with her daughter, and went into the cabin. Maggie, knowing her mood, dared not follow her.

CHAPTER II.

ANN WYLDE'S VISITORS.

"MOTHER ANN," as Ronald called her, had not been long in the cabin, when two men emerged from the woods and came toward the house. Maggie, who had thrown herself upon the bench at the door, looked up at the sound of steps, and watched the new-comers. They were not unaccustomed to visitors even in this remote region, from time to time, and she was not at all alarmed.

One of the new-comers was a tall man, in the dress of the Moran's Partisans, a band of French rangers, with whom the gallant Putnam frequently measured strength. He had strongly-marked features of the French cast, and a certain careless *sang-froid*, peculiar to his nation. He might have been forty years of age. His arms were of the best description for the period, and he carried, in addition to his pistols and knife, a heavy hatchet. Altogether, he was not by any means the sort of person you would like to meet as an enemy.

His companion was of slighter build, and of darker complexion than his comrade. His limbs, however, were symmetrical, and full of vigor. His eye was dark and piercing, and his black hair fell upon his shoulders, unwavering and unglorious as an Indian's. A sneer seemed permanently fixed upon his thin lip, which gave his face a disagreeable expression. Otherwise, he was a handsome young fellow, but looked, like his companion, a dangerous enemy.

His dress was similar to the other's, with the simple exception of a certain jaunty way of wearing it, almost foppish, if such a word may be used in connection with a forest-costume. He carried a small switch in his hand, with which he was indolently cutting off the thistle-tops as he walked. But at the sight of the cabin he threw it away.

The two men, evidently with a preconceived idea, approached the cabin. Maggie rose to receive them, for hospitality was a law of the frontier. The two looked at each other with

questioning eyes, evidently astonished at the rare beauty of the forest-maid.

"You are welcome, gentlemen," she said. "Will you enter?"

They followed her into the cabin, where Maggie left them with her mother, and then went away from the house, evidently to the great chagrin of the younger of the two men.

The moment Ann saw the visitors, her countenance brightened.

"Herbert Moran! You here?"

"Ay, old dame, Herbert Moran, little as you looked to see him, is here. Have you no welcome for an old friend?"

"The best of welcomes to a soldier of France!" cried the old woman. "You know my failings, Herbert—to hate England with deadly loathing; to love France as a child of that beautiful land should love it."

"That is no failing, old dame," said Moran, kindly. "I am glad you hold to the old country still. I, your scapegrace cousin, on business for France, made bold to stop at your dwelling. Let me present to you my Lieutenant, Jaques Chattillon, a true son of France."

They exchanged greetings.

"Was that little Marguerite who ran away but now?" asked Moran. "I had almost forgotten her. For, you remember, it was fifteen years ago when I saw her, and she was a child of three."

"That was Marguerite."

"By our lady of Nôtre Dame," cried the young officer, "she is the rarest beauty I ever saw. I own to more surprise than I ever felt before. I have lived in Paris, in the midst of the gayety of that grand city, and I tell you there was not one to compare with this young girl among all the beauties of that gay capital."

"By my word, Monsieur Jaques, you are warm in your commendation. Nevertheless, you are right. I have seen more than you—gayer ladies and taller—but none so fair as this forest-flower."

"A truce to this!" cried Ann, evidently not ill-pleased. "The child is a good one, and I love her as my life. But tell me, if you will, what brings you to this country? You are far from your camps on Champlain."

"You are right, madame," replied the younger soldier. "We have had a weary journey, and have but now returned. We had been to the fort on the Ohio, called by us, Duquesne. We stayed long enough to witness and participate in the destruction of the English army, and then returned. When Dieskau hears our news, my word for it, he will put his men in motion. Have you any thing to tell us—you, who are a friend of France?"

"Yes," replied the old woman, her eyes twinkling malignantly, "I have much to tell you—much that you will desire to know. I have kept my eyes and ears about me, for I looked for a visit from some one who is a child of France. The English are gathering a great force, and have built a fort at the head-waters of the Hudson. They call it Fort Edward."

"Who built this fort?" demanded Moran.

"General Lyman. It was called after him by the soldiers, but a new General has taken command, named Johnson, and he changed the title, because his soldiers love Lyman too well."

"Rivalry among the Generals! Ah, that is good. Might this Lyman be bought, think you?"

"There is not gold enough in France to do it. He is above price."

"Then they are gathering about this fort, under their new General. Do they know about Duquesne?"

"They do not yet know; but Captain Mannering, an officer in that army, passed my hut to-day, coming from Fort Cumberland. He told the news to me, and will get there in a day or two."

Moran laughed. "It would hardly pay us to stop that messenger, or we would follow him at once. Be that as it may, we must get to our camp as soon as possible. I should like to greet my pretty cousin before I go."

Ann stepped to the door and called Tom. That worthy came slowly, fearful that his mistress had designs upon his knife, which he hid on his approach. Upon receiving orders to find Maggie and bring her to the house, he hurried away at the fastest walk he could muster.

Maggie came in at once, and was presented to her cousin,

who paid her some pretty French compliments before he presented her to his officer, who stood looking at her with admiring eyes. They found her sparkling, vivacious, and better educated than could have been expected. But her father had been a man of culture, and he had given her a good foundation for self-instruction. Before they had talked half an hour, Jaques Chattillon was over head and ears in love with the cousin of his captain.

She liked him well enough, for she found him an expert in the small-talk of great cities, never at a loss for something to say. He was intent upon pleasing, and went away with the comfortable impression that he had succeeded.

They took a meal at the cabin, hastily prepared, during which Jaques admired the beautiful girl, whose light figure was set off to advantage by the piquant dress she wore. They said good-by somewhat unwillingly, shouldered their pieces, and started for their camp.

Jaques had little to say, and was rallied on his abstraction by Moran.

"You act like a man in love," said he.

"So I am," replied Jaques.

"Diable ! You don't mean to tell me you are caught by the first flash from the eyes of my pretty cousin ?"

"Precisely."

"But you understand your position. You are heir-presumptive to a title in France, a handsome fellow enough, whose heart has been laid siege to by the prettiest of French damsels, and have resisted all assaults of the enemy. Do you yield now ?"

"Without condition."

"Jaques !"

"Well ?"

"Do you know what your father will say ?"

"No ; and care less than I know."

"But suppose, Jaques—just for the sake of argument, you know—suppose this young lady should refuse you, fortune and all ?"

"Eh ?"

"Suppose she loves some one else ?"

"I will kill him !" cried Jaques, with a savage glitter in his black eyes.

Moran laughed again. "I give you up, my young friend. You are so far gone that the attempt to reason with you would be all in vain. I give you my sympathy, and say that a more beautiful maiden than my cousin it has not been my lot to see. Perhaps it is the contrast with her mother; and yet, Jaques Chattillon, I can remember the day when her mother was fully as beautiful as she."

"That crooked old hag!"

"The same."

"Bah! you are trying to deceive me. It can not be that this is so."

"It is undoubtedly true."

"Since you assert it so positively, I suppose I must believe you. She is very old. How happens it that she is so changed?"

"She has some of the old leaven in her nature, which the girl has not, and it has warped her body and mind before the time. Would it please you to know what I think about this girl?"

"Yes."

"I think she is in love."

Jaques turned upon his friend with a fierce look.

"Not with me, Jaques—not with me. Spare me yet a little longer. She is in love with this Captain Ronald Manering. Any one but a man who was himself in love, would have seen this. Whenever we spoke his name, a flush would steal into her cheek—a delicate flush, like the glow on the sky in summer weather; and she listened with great earnestness, whereas she was looking bored by our compliments the moment before."

Jaques fingered the hilt of his knife in a significant manner.

"If you prove this to me," said he, "I shall have another enemy."

"Pardon, my choleric young friend, you have already as many as you can manage."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Allow me to doubt. I must, at all events, add to my list all those who aspire to the love of Marguerite Wylde."

"Have your own way, then, for the fiend's sake. It is

nothing to me; only, if you seek Marguerite's love, it must be as a man of honor, or you will have an enemy in me. Do you understand?"

"You speak plainly enough, sir, and I have no reason to fear you. I love her too well to trifle with her affections."

'Thanks; forget what I said, and may you prosper.'

CHAPTER III.

JOHNSON'S CAMP.

GENERAL WILLIAM JOHNSON had established a camp at the head of Lake George, and toward this Ronald Mannering made his way, after his interview with Maggie. He crossed the Mohawk some distance below the fort, and hurried forward at his best speed.

He had much to hurry him. He knew that Johnson only waited, or at least, claimed to wait, for the coming of a messenger from the south, before he moved upon his own campaign. This tendency to *wait*, marred the fortune of many a British General in these early days. Too much haste, as in the case of Braddock and Abercrombie, too little at Oswego and William Henry, brought ruin on many a noble enterprise.

He found the camp in considerable commotion from the report of a scout, who had just come in, that there was great activity in the camp at Crown Point, and a prevalent notion that the French were about to move.

He was stopped by some of his friends as soon as he entered camp, eager to hear the news from the south, but he put them all aside as soon as possible, and sent in his name to the General by an orderly.

Several junior officers still clung about him and endeavored to pump some kind of information from him, in which they signally failed. He occupied his time in noting what had been done for defense.

The orderly came back in a moment.

"The General would see Captain Mannering without a moment's delay."

Ronald shook off his young friends and entered the General's quarters; a murmur of dissatisfaction followed him.

The country occupied by the hostile forces was at this time covered by a dense forest, and Johnson made preparations for a long stay by felling a few trees and building huts for the accommodation of himself and officers. It was at this place that he was found by Ronald, on his return from his southern expedition.

There was a council of officers that day in the General's quarters. Many of the juniors were present, and among others, Israel Putnam. He was standing apart from the rest when Ronald was announced, and an expression of concern deepened on his florid face at the name. Ronald came in hastily, and saluting the General and the officers present, presented the dispatches from Washington and Dunbar. The General read them, and a storm of fearful passion swept across his strongly-marked face. He had known the material of which Braddock's army was composed, and it threw him into a terrible rage to know that all the hopes of the past weeks had vanished, and that the remnant of the army which might and should have been in Du Quesne, were fugitives within the walls of Fort Cumberland.

Johnson had faith in the provincials, and he saw the mistake of Braddock. The old British wrongheadedness had done the work of destruction.

"Ruined! by heavens!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet.

The officers, who had not heard the news, pressed forward in silent dismay, dreading the worst. A few hurried words informed them of the catastrophe.

"Gentlemen," said the General, at last, "will you leave me alone awhile? Captain Mannering, let me beg a little of your time."

The officers hurried out of the tent, the provincials prudently bottling up their anger until fairly out of the hut. When there, they gathered in angry knots and discussed the unwelcome tidings with lowering brows.

Ronald spent an hour in close consultation with the General. In the end he came out, and was at once fastened upon

by Putnam, who, having exhausted all he knew of the disaster in a loud debate with his brother officers, collared his friend Ronald for additional particulars. Ronald smiled at the earnestness of the partisan, who, at this early period, was known as one of the best soldiers in Johnson's camp.

"I'll tell you what it is, my lad," he cried, "we shall have to make an end of this."

"Of what, my dear fellow?"

"You know as well as I do. Turning men into the woods to fight Indians, who depend upon ordinary modes of warfare. Yes, sir, they send over Scotchmen who have fought battles, and brave ones too, on many plains in Europe, and who bring with them their ideas of file right and file left, march and countermarch, and all that nonsense, and try to make it work in the face and eyes of an Indian ambuscade. Haven't I seen it all? and don't I know all about it?"

"Perhaps you do, but—"

"You know I do, Ronald Mannering. I have fought over the ground under different leaders, and I know how it is. They will keep a line of men in line of battle, with thickets on both flanks and one in front, the infernal fools—and expect them to stand. Of course they won't do it—how should they, poor devils?—and when they run, they blame them, and not the impenetrable stupidity of the Generals they give us. Mind, I don't say that of Johnson, for, look you, I think he has a wrinkle or two in his noddle more than the greater portion of our men."

Ronald laughed slightly. "If some of them could hear you, my dear Put, it would be the end of you."

"I am talking to a provincial," replied Put. "I know better than to speak my mind to them, licking a General's boots as they do. Look at Lyman, now."

"I understand you. But these things can't be helped, you know. A man learns many things at the army."

"So I think," said old Put, grimly. "Zounds, though, it makes my blood boil. What are we staying here for—can you tell?"

"Waiting for Lake George to dry up, so that we can march down to Crown Point on the bottom. I thought you knew that before," replied Ronald, in a mocking tone.

Putnam grinned in his odd fashion.

"Sensible, isn't it, in a General who knows more than all the rest of them put together. There is Shirley, now, who has command of the armies. Why don't *he* do something? Oh, Lord! it's enough to drive one mad!"

"Take it coolly."

"What! Take it coolly, did you say? You don't know Israel Putnam if you expect him to do that. Good heavens how can any one take it coolly, under such circumstances. Did you stop anywhere on the way?"

"Once."

"I can guess where. Somewhere about the bank of the Mohawk, where old Mother Ann keeps house. Phew! What an old spitfire she is. I had a talk with her once, when I chased Moran up that way. I can fight, but I would sooner face half a dozen Indians than that long-tongued woman. How is Mistress Maggie?"

"She is well."

"You had a passage at arms with the old cat?"

"Yes, confound her."

"Not much like Maggie, I take it. That old woman is with the French, heart and soul. I'd like to know where she came from."

Ronald repeated the conversation with the hag in the forest.

"Ah," said Putnam; "so, so! I knew there was black blood somewhere, all the time. The old she-Judas! I have no doubt she gives information of the movements of our army, from time to time, which helps the French not a little. No trouble to follow the motions of this army, though—they don't move us once a month; and they might take Albany while we are buried in the brambles, and we be none the wiser for it. I hate Frenchmen, Ronald, but, by Jove! I do admire the way they work against us."

"They are together, and we are not."

"Right; you have the secret, and we shall never be together while they treat the provincials like dirt. Where are you going?"

"I am looking for Ephraim Peters. Have you seen him?"

"He was talking with General Lyman about half an hour ago, down by his quarters. Let us walk down and see."

They walked down together, and inquired for the person in question. An officer, lounging in front of the quarters, said that Peters was in the hut, and went in to call him out.

He appeared in a moment—a green, uncouth man, who had evidently never seen any other soil than that of the Colonies. He held in one hand a huge piece of bread, and in the other a slice of bacon, of which he was disposing, with equal impartiality to both. He greeted the two officers with a nod, but without pausing in his agreeable employment.

"You are busy, Eph," said Putnam.

"Rayther," said Eph.

"You are wanted, Eph; come to my quarters," said Ronald.

He followed without a word, and went into the tent, still engaged upon the bread and bacon, which was rapidly vanishing under his terrific assaults. As the last huge mouthful disappeared, Eph licked his lips, as if to make sure that no morsel of the luscious viands should escape him, gave a great sigh of satisfaction, and said:

"Drive on, durn you."

Eph Peters, green-looking and uncouth though he was, was known in the border war as one of the best scouts and spies in that section. He had repeatedly ventured into the camp of the enemy in disguise, and brought away valuable information for the British Generals. He was a regularly enlisted man in the company of Ronald, but was allowed to come and go at his pleasure, in consideration of the information he was sure to bring in on his return.

Ronald, knowing his man, waited patiently until he had disposed of the food in his hands, wiped his bushy red beard, and proclaimed himself ready to listen to whatever his superior might be disposed to say.

"You haven't done any thing lately, Eph?"

"Sp'iling, cappen; raaly, neow, I am."

"I am going to set you to work."

"Dew tell! You ain't! That's the best news I've hern sence I was a baby. Why, dot rot it, what dew vew think a teller is made of, to lay around in this way? 'Tain't natur', cappen."

"We are about to send you on a service of great difficulty and danger."

"Thank yew; thet's my kind, yew know."

Ronald entered at once into the details of the required service, which would take the scout into the camp of the enemy at Crown Point, unless they were already on the march.

Eph was ready in a few moments. A few days' rations of cooked food was placed in his knapsack, and he shouldered his piece and went off into the woods to the northward, keeping a sharp look-out for hostile Indians, and choosing paths not often used. He had scouted about the position of the enemy many times before, and knew the ground well.

He always went alone, having a well-grounded dread of the powers of his comrades in the way of woodcraft. Their tread broke sticks as they threaded the forest, and they made fires of wet wood. Such persons might be ornaments to the regular army, but they were not the men for Eph Peters. He had taken one of them with him on one occasion only, but the amateur scout became frightened a few miles out, and ran all the way back to Fort Edward, at the top of his speed! From that day, our friend scouted alone.

The Indians knew Eph, and had followed his trail many weary miles, in the hope of killing the red-haired hunter; but he always managed to elude them.

His education in the great school of nature was perfect. He could swim for a longer time than any man in the camp. On clear ground he had beaten the best runner in the camp in a foot-race. His strength was prodigious, and in the first trial he had won great credit. Wandering into camp one day, green and uncouth as usual, where the boys were indulging a favorite exercise at that time, throwing a weight, they challenged him to a trial. He lifted the ponderous missile, poised himself a moment, and sent it out like a thunderbolt, fully seven feet beyond the best throw. Physical strength was respected in those days, and Eph's standing was at once established.

Few would have cared to go with the scout in his expedition, so reckless of danger had he become. He hesitated not at all to venture into the enemy's camp, even in broad day, trusting to his wits or good fortune to take him safely out again. Although a Yankee, dyed in the wool, he was a

perfect mimic, and could counterfeit any voice he chose, and maintain it in a long conversation. Such was the man who was well and widely known in his time for daring deeds as a spy and scout.

He hurried off, at a quick pace, toward the north. He had changed his dress of homespun for one of buckskin, in imitation of the *voyageurs* who formed part of the French army. He had many changes of clothing, which he wore to suit occasion.

A few miles away from camp he struck a new trail in the woods, one that had been crossed within the hour. He looked at them closely, and by his unfailing woodcraft, was able to say that both were white men who had passed that way, though one wore Huron moccasins.

He had fallen upon the trail of the two Frenchmen, who had spent some time, as we have seen, at Ann Wylde's cabin. They had traveled slowly that morning, and been forced out of their course by finding the camp of Johnson in their path. Thus it happened, that when Eph struck their trail they were but a few miles ahead.

As the trail lay in his course, he studied it, and followed it quickly. In an hour he was rewarded by seeing Moran and Chattillon strolling on over the forest-path toward Champlain, laughing and jesting with each other as they went. He kept them in view.

At noon they sat down to eat by a running brook, and the scout crept near them in the bushes, and listened to their conversation. He knew them both, and gathered enough from their talk to learn their errand, and the course they would take. He could have shot down one of the two, and matched himself with the other, with every prospect of success, but such an idea never entered his brain. He only cared to elude them, since their destruction could work no possible good either to himself or his cause.

They rose after they had finished the meal, took a good draught from the running brook, and went on their way, unconscious of the crafty enemy concealed in the bushes.

Eph rose, with a chuckle, when they were out of hearing, and made a wide circuit, designing to leave them behind him and reach Crown Point that night. He succeeded so well,

that, two hours after, looking back from a lofty hill, he saw them coming slowly on, some miles away.

He hastened forward, and approached Crown Point. He determined to go in cautiously, and turned aside into a deep thicket, to await the approach of night, having first ascertained the exact position of things in the camp.

There were three hours yet till nightfall, and as Eph never wasted time in idleness, he curled himself up in the thicket, and immediately began to sleep with great industry.

Promptly awaking as darkness came on, he issued from his hiding-place, and drew nearer to the fort, where he waited for the posting of the guard for the night. A picket paced to and fro a few yards away. He crawled up closer as he heard the drums in quarters calling out the guard-relief.

He could hear them approaching, challenged by every guard, until they came to the one in his front, a fine fellow, in a grenadier's cap.

"Who goes there?"

"Guard-relief, with the countersign," was the answer.

"Advance, one man, and give the countersign."

"*Dieskau.*"

"The countersign is correct," said the grenadier, recovering, and falling into line with the relieved men, as a comrade stepped out and took his place.

"Be watchful," said the officer of the guard; "this is an important post." And he passed on, while Eph lay chuckling at the ease with which he had obtained the countersign.

He turned, and crept backward until he reached the bushes. This done, he rose, and advanced boldly to meet the guard.

He was challenged.

The language of the sentinel was not pure French, but the *salois* of Canada. In this dialect Eph was perfect, and answered promptly, giving the word.

"You are late, *mon camarade*," said the picket. "The guard is set and the word given."

"I know it, *mon ami*, but one must look to his duty, though he be late."

"Right again. What; are we to have good news from the English?"

"The best; let me give you good-night, *camarade*. You shall hear of me before morning."

He did!

Eph walked down to the fires and stood a little apart, while he took a view of the quarters. The common soldiers lived in huts, this pleasant weather, formed from the boughs of the hemlock. For the officers, more substantial structures had been formed of logs, "chinked" with mud and lighted through wooden bars. The largest cabin, over which floated the lilies of France, was the head-quarters of the Baron Dieskau.

Eph loitered down toward this hut, for a better view, as he thought he might find it convenient to use that place as a shelter before the night was over. The hut had two apartments: one used as a reception-room by the baron, and the other as a sleeping-apartment. Eph peeped in as he passed the open door, and saw the General at his table, bending over his work.

There was a guard before the door of the cabin, pacing up and down. Plainly, he could not get in at that door by stratagem. With his accustomed hardihood he advanced, and demanded admittance.

The soldier looked at him a moment in doubt, and then went in to prefer his request.

Some difficulty was made about admitting him; but at last he was told to step in, and found the baron—a noble-looking man, advanced in years—seated at a table covered with papers. He looked up as the spy entered, saying, in a sharp tone:

"Your business, sir."

Eph had his answer ready:

"My name is Jean Fontaine. I served under Captain Baireau, at Du Quesne, and now the British are destroyed in that region, I wish to change my service to Crown Point. Captain Moran liked me, and sent me on to join his troop, sire."

"Captain Moran!"

"Yes, sire."

"And where is Captain Moran now? Why is he not here? Why does he not bring me news from Du Quesne?"

"Captain Moran is a brave man, sire. He is coming on

as fast as he may; but he has hurt himself in some way, so that he walks but slowly. He has stopped for the night at Médecine Spring, and desires that I may ride all night and bring a horse to him."

"Is he alone?"

"*Non*; he has with him his friend, Ensign Chattillon."

"You can tell me the news from Du Quesne?"

"Sire, the English are utterly routed and scattered to the four winds. Only a sorry remnant, sire, have made their way back to Fort Cumberland."

"Ah, that is news indeed. But the captain will tell me all. In how many hours can you reach the Médecine Spring?"

"In three, sire."

"It is enough." He touched a bell and an orderly appeared.

"Do you desire to go at once, Jean Fontaine?"

"It is not necessary, sire; the captain will not ride at night."

"Orderly, you will see that three good horses are made ready, and given into the care of this good soldier when he desires to go. Stay, I will write a pass."

The baron drew some paper toward him and wrote, giving orders to pass Jean Fontaine unquestioned, at any hour that night.

Eph looked it over.

"Now take him away, orderly, and send Louis de Sayre to take your place. You shall have charge of this brave fellow. Entreat him well, for he hath done good service and brought good news," said the baron.

Eph walked away with the orderly, who began to question him at once. The spy was not slow to reply, though his answers lacked one little peculiarity sometimes thought important—truth.

"We shall make a night of it, *mon ami*," said the volatile Frenchman. "You shall see that we at Crown Point are not behind Du Quesne in hospitality. I shall go out into the camp after I have taken you to my tent, and gather up a few friends, and we shall enjoy ourselves until we must go."

"Your pardon," said Eph. "I would prefer a quiet chat with you, as I can stay but an hour before I ride."

"As you will," said the orderly. "You are my guest, and have the right to command me. I am at your service."

They passed into the tent and sat down, when the orderly produced a wine-flask, of the contents of which he boasted, and then began a conversation very interesting and important to Eph.

"We are having busy work our way," said he. "How long will it be before we shall be at work in this part of the world?"

The orderly moved closer and laid his finger on his lip.

"I tell you this in the way of honor," said he. "You have changed your service at the right time."

"How so?"

"Because we march soon to attack the English."

"Ah-ha!"

"It is so; they have gathered a great force at the head of the lake called 'George.' We shall march with all speed, before they can return, and strike a fort which they have built at the head of a river which they call after their great sailor, who likewise claims the Canadas (a pest upon him) Hootzon."

"They call it, Hudson."

"*Oui*—Hudson. They have built a fort upon those waters, a fine fort, full of powder and ball. We shall take this fort, and cut off the retreat of the English. They will fall into our power."

"The plan is good," said Eph. "Are you sure it is the right one?"

"I am sure; we march to-morrow."

"I have heard of this fort," said the spy. "It is called Edward, and is very strong. Are you sure we can take it?"

"I think so; it will be a surprise."

"Perhaps!" thought Eph. But he did not speak his thought aloud. He gathered from the other the probable route of the army, and then called for his horses. The orderly volunteered to see him safe out of camp, and they rode out together, finding no trouble until about to cross the last picket-line, where the pass was examined. But the orderly, who was well known, vouched for the fact that this was Jean Fontaine, and he was allowed to pass. He shook hands cordially with the orderly, and promised to see him when he

came back. Then, gathering up his reins, and leading two horses by lariats, he rode off at an easy pace.

He rode straight for the Médecine Spring, and reached it at early dawn. The two Frenchmen had not stopped here, but at a spring two miles away. He dismounted and drank from the clear water, hanging up the gourd, which had been placed here for drinking purposes by the hunters. He then took out a piece of paper and wrote these words :

“ If the Baron Dieskau should ask for Jean Fontaine, when you get to camp, tell him that he has been transformed, and now bears the name of Eph Peters, scout, spy and ranger in his Britannic Majesty’s service. I have borrowed three horses from your camp, which I will return when I have no use for them. EPH PETERS.”

This paper he addressed to Captain Moran or Ensign Chattillon, and attached it to the handle of the gourd in such a way that it must attract attention, and then led the horses well out of sight and hearing of the spring, and came back to witness the effect.

The two officers reached the spot soon after, and Moran took down the gourd to drink. His own name first attracted his attention, and he opened the note with some misgivings. No sooner had he read it than he broke into a series of French oaths, much to the astonishment of Jaques Chattillon, and to the unspeakable delight of Eph, who, prowling in the bushes, could hardly repress audible demonstrations of his joy.

“ What is it ?” asked Jaques, in utter bewilderment.

Moran tossed him the note, and the effect upon him was much the same as upon his superior.

“ What does it mean ?”

“ You don’t know that fellow—I do. I have not the least doubt he has been in Crown Point.”

“ What to do ?”

“ He is an English spy. Are you strong enough for a run ?”

“ Yes !” replied Jaques, fiercely.

“ Loosen your clothing, then, and we will run in. I have my fears as to what that dare-devil has been doing in Crown Point, and the sooner we get there the better.”

Eph saw them set off on a dead run, and at once started in the opposite direction, mounted one of the horses, and rode for the camp of Johnson.

The young officers ran into the camp of the baron in a few hours, and Moran at once sent in his name to that commander. An immediate reply came back, that the baron would be glad to see his young friend, and hear his report. Moran lost no time in presenting himself at the quarters. The baron received him kindly.

"Have you just come in?"

"Yes, sire."

"How is your hurt?"

"Sire?"

"How is your hurt?"

"Your pardon, sire. You are jesting, or I do not understand you. I am not hurt."

"We were informed by the person whom you sent on before you, that you had received a hurt in some way, and found it difficult to walk. The person you sent had orders from you to take out horses, so that you could ride into camp."

Moran set his teeth hard together.

"A curse upon him. He was a spy, then, for I have not been hurt, neither did I send any one before."

"He spoke the Canadian *patois* fluently, and said you enlisted him for your company. He gave his name as Jean Fontaine, formerly in the force of Captain Bareau, at Du Quesne."

"Diable! Captain Bareau had such a man, but he was killed under strange circumstances, at the battle of Fort Du Quesne. As for this fellow, he is an English spy!"

The baron sprung to his feet.

"Do you mean to tell me, seriously and gravely, that this fellow, who stood where you do now, and told his story so glibly, is a spy? Have you proof?"

"The very best—his own hand-writing," replied the partisan, producing the note which he had taken from the handle of the gourd, at the Médecine Spring. The baron read it.

"Well?" said the captain.

"Unparalleled impudence!"

"Yes, sire; I wish we had a few like him on our side.

But to tell the truth, sire, we have not a decent spy among us."

"You think so?" said the baron.

"I do. What man among us would do as this man has done to-day? I know him well, sire—a man of wonderful resources, born in this colony, a rough, uncouth fellow, but full of tricks and devices."

"You magnify the office of a spy."

"Sire, the office, though looked upon as degrading, on account of the ignominious death it brings, is yet one of the noblest and bravest. Why is the man who, having a thousand chances of safety, gives up his life upon the battle-field, better, nay, as good, as he who, with only the *hope* of escape, goes into an enemy's camp, in the service of his king. It brings him a disgraceful death. That is the law of nations, not the law of God. It is necessary—just, perhaps; but the deeds of a spy are not the less noble."

"You speak warmly, Moran."

"I feel it, sire. Perhaps the perilous life I lead, as an irregular soldier, has given me this idea. Do not think I desire the escape of Peters—far from it, sire. But I should not feel for him the less respect if he were to die by the cord to-morrow."

"He has your horses," said the baron, with a smile. "He said you were waiting for him at the Médecine Spring. How did he know so much about you?"

"From his speaking of Jean Fontaine, and calling himself after his name, I think I can inform you. When Jaques and myself rested and took our dinner yesterday, he was in the bushes, doubtless, as it was there I spoke of Jean, and the manner of his death. We made up our minds as to the place where we should pass the night, and this gave him every advantage."

"Very likely; now, what do you think this fellow has picked up in his way?"

"Three of my horses," said Moran, with a sort of groan.

"And yet you would not like to see him hung?"

"No, by St. Denis! I *should* like to shoot him myself, in a quiet way, some fine morning, but he is a fine fellow, and deserves to die the death of a man, and not of a dog."

"You are more than half right. What else do you think he has picked up?"

"I can't say. It looks to me like a piece of bravado, only he is not the man to come into camp in that way for nothing. He has doubtless gained little."

"Whatever he has gained, we will render useless by moving on at once. Since you have been away, captain, I have determined to attack Fort Edward. I understand that the place is not very strong, and poorly garrisoned, and we can easily carry it. What do you think?"

"You want me to say just what I think?"

"Certainly."

"It won't work."

"And why?"

"The Indians are afraid of the cannon, sire."

"I had thought of that, and we must depend on our regulars. They are the men, Captain Moran."

"They are brave men, sire, and brave men can do much. When do you march?"

"In an hour. Have your men in readiness, and see that they are provided with three days' cooked rations. You have as much influence among the Indians as any man in my camp. Go among them and let them know that we are going on an expedition where we shall get much glory and spoils, and—you know what to say. I leave it wholly in your hands."

"Thanks, sire," said Moran. "My dispatches are here."

"I shall attend to them at once. Our English friend favored me with the news that we had defeated the English at Du Quesne."

"He told you the truth."

"I am glad of that. I began to fear that the story was like himself—a lie! Did Jaques come in with you?"

"Yes, sire."

"Send him to me. I must make him my aid in this expedition. You shall not be forgotten. Have you seen the renegade Mohawk?"

"Yes."

"What does he say of his tribe?"

"They are strongly in favor of the English; this new

commander, Johnson, is a rare Indian agent, and they are all in his favor."

"I am sorry for that. If we could influence the Mohawks, we might do much with the other tribes. They are not much like the Hurons of the lakes."

"No, indeed; the priests make many converts."

"Rare converts, indeed. Has De Lacy fully recovered?"

"He has."

"Thanks; that will do; send Jaques to me."

The battle with Dieskau was fought and won. The baron was a prisoner in the hands of the English. Ronald gained considerable credit by covering the retreat of the broken battalions of Williams with his company, after the death of that gallant leader.

Among the prisoners taken was Jaques Chattillon, who was brought in by the New Hampshire boys on the second day. As he was of some note, he was well received, and upon his parole not to attempt an escape, he had the run of the British camp, and made some friends among the officers. With Ronald he was especially intimate, and worried from him, in some way, the secret of his love for Maggie, whom the Frenchman claimed as a relation.

While they were still in camp, Mother Ann Wylde came to William Henry, as the fort was now called. Fearless of danger, she had followed the old Indian path down the river, accompanied only by the doughty Tom, whose stories of his prowess among the savages were wonderful to hear. By his account, he had destroyed the entire Huron nation in various encounters, fighting with his bare fists. Tom and his brother, dignified by the name of little Dave, used to vie with each other in fabulous stories, for the benefit of the other chattels upon Mother Ann's farm.

Whatever may have been the errand of Mother Ann to the camp, it was speedily accomplished, and she soon left on her return. She had an interview with Jaques before she set out. She rode out of the camp on that afternoon, and next morning Jaques, after obtaining permission to leave on parole, to fight no more until exchanged, went to Albany.

He purchased a horse before he left, one of the three which Eph had "obtained" in the camp at Crown Point—in fact,

his own property, but which Eph, who kept out of sight in the transaction, forced him to buy at a fabulous price.

Soon after, Ronald obtained leave of absence, as General Johnson decided to go into winter-quarters, much to the disgust of his officers. He commenced building a fort upon the ground of the late battle, which he named Fort William Henry. The idea of a fort at this exposed point was scouted by the military authority, but Sir William, having been knighted soon after this battle, wished to erect some monument to commemorate the victory.

So the choleric Putnam, unable to get leave of absence, watched the work in the trenches from day to day, while Ronald Mannering set out on a journey to the Mohawk, fortified for a bout with Ann Wylde.

He prevailed upon the acute scout, Eph Peters, to accompany him, and bought from him one of the horses which his genius had wrung from the baron. Eph gloried considerably over this exploit, and consented to accompany his officer because he appreciated the richness of the joke.

They knew that to approach the cabin at once would expose them to a premature broadside from the long tongue of Ann, and Ronald knew that she would be more than usually vindictive on account of the recent defeat of the French, in a battle which she had expected to end in quite another way.

Eph told his companion of a limestone cave in the vicinity of the house, and in this it was decided to put the horses. Eph then volunteered to go up and see how the land lay, and return.

He approached the house about nine in the morning, and surprised Tom in the act of sharpening his knife upon a stone.

"Hullo, Snowball!" said he.

"Wha' you call I?" questioned the negro, rising wrathfully. "S'pose I tek you, marse imperence, an' fro' you ober my head, eh?"

"S'pose yew dew," said Eph, with inimitable *nonchalance*. "What then?"

"W'at you call a nigger, den?"

"Snowball, didn't I? Ef I didn't, it were an oversight, and I'll call ye that now."

Tom looked up at the tall Yankee in some wonder

"S'pose you don' know how many inches dar' is in dis yer mortal frame, does yer, sojer?"

"No, I don't; dew yew?" replied the spj.

"Golly; don't know what make ob you, marse, you's so cool all de time. Does yer t'ink I c'u'd fro' you down?"

"Can't say, Tom; that's your name, I believe."

"How de debble you know dat, eh? You talk to de spooks, sam; as ole missee, I s'pose. Tell you what, w'ich side you on? Don't car' w'ich side you's on; I's English, I be."

"Good for yew; so am I, Snowball."

"Dat so? Lick 'em like de debble, dat day, didn't we. Sassy in dem, too, seein' we has de bes' right, to cum right up to our army dat way; but we lick' em, dough, dat we did."

"We did?"

"Ya-as! we. Who set you up for a talker, you. Course we did it. Who else? Was you dar'?"

"Yes, Snowball."

"Like to been dar', by hokey. Like to fro' 'em ober de moon, some day, dem darn old Frencher fellers. But jus' you look here. We's got a full-blooded, rambunxious, thievin', goose-stealin', hoss-ridin', no-nigger Frencher, right in dat ar' very house, long o' Miss Maggie and ole missee; dar'!"

Eph at once became interested in the darky's talk.

"How's that, Sam?"

"In dar', I say, a mean, full-blooded—"

"Don't go all oyer it again—talk sense. Who have you got in here, 'sides the wimmin?"

"Tole you, two, free times; darn ole Frencher."

"Do you know his name?"

"Debbil couldn't say his name. Come here one udder time, long o' nudder darn ole Frencher, and stay little while. Tation of de ole woman, dat udder one was. His name Moran."

"Aha!"

"Know him?"

"Yes, seen him somewhere. Is this one a young fellow, about as tall as—well, say as tall as Ronald Mannering, with long, straight black ha'r, and an Injin look about him gin-erally?"

"Yaas, yaas, dat's him. Dat's de debble—you know him?"

"Name any thing like Thomson?"

"No."

"Jones?"

"No."

"Brown?"

"Nottin' like it."

"Stone?"

"No."

"Chattillon?"

"Dat's it; now I know jes' as well as I want to, dat you's one ob dem witch fellers. How de debble you know his name, ef it wasn't for that?"

"You are right. I *am* one of *them fellers*, and if you don't look sharp, I'll whisk you off some night on a broomstick and leave you on the top of the highest mountain by the Horicon."

"Dar', dar', Marse Witch, I h'ar you. But don't you try none ob yer tricks in dis house, fer we got one, I tell you, kin beat you at yer own trade, dat she kin. Beat ye jest as easy."

"Who?"

"Ole missee."

"Busy in thar'?"

"On'y talkin'."

"He in thar'?"

"Yaas."

"Miss Maggie thar'?"

"Don't you try none ob yer tricks on Miss Maggie."

"No, I won't; I promise that. Is she thar'?"

"Yaas; her dar'."

"Old woman thar'?"

"Course she dar'. Why? 'cause she likes dat Frencher, an' likes to hab 'em come talk wid Miss Maggie. She no car'. Like 'em well 'nuff 'cause he kin talk—talk—talk—tongue nebber stop goin'."

"Cut out of the way, blacky, and never let on you've seen me. I'm goin' in."

Sam walked off, and Eph knocked at the door. Maggie opened it and invited him in. He accepted the courtesy, and threw down a haunch of venison, part of a fine buck he had

shot further down the stream, and had brought as a peace-offering to the cabin.

"Thar'," he said. "I dew that when I go into a house whar' thar' are wimmin-folks, an' no man round to keep 'em. You'll take that venison from me, my pretty miss, won't you?"

"Certainly, with many thanks, and you shall have a meal from it as soon as it can be made ready," replied Maggie.

"That's what I was thinkin' ov when I brought down the duck. Thinks I, there's mother Wylde an' her pretty darter live up by the Cohoos. Stands to reason, bein' they are alone, they'll like a nice haunch of venison. And so I brought it."

He cast his eyes furtively about the cabin as he spoke, to note its occupants. These were the old woman and Jaques Chattillon. The latter was well known to Eph, though that person had been careful to keep out of his way in the camp of Johnson. Not that he feared to meet him, but he wished to be known to as few as possible in the French army, as too great familiarity might lead to some awkward rencontres. Having a prudent regard for his safety, he took care to know every one, without being known himself.

Jaques looked at the hunter, as he seemed, from his dress, and at once came to the conclusion that nothing was to be feared from him. Indeed, the countenance of Eph expressed simple good-nature, and lack of brains.

"Good-day to yew, mother," he said, addressing the old lady, who, knowing what he was, at once snapped at him viciously.

"And what brings you, Eph Peters, to the cabin of Ann Wylde?"

"Dying to see ye, old mother."

"You lie, Eph Peters. You are after no good, and I know it. Haven't I watched you? Haven't I been on your track when you sneaked and crawled about the camps of the French? This is a spy, Monsieur Jaques—an English spy!"

"You are a rare bird, mother," said Eph, putting his hands upon his knees and laughing loudly. "A rare bird, even for these woods."

Jaques Chattillon rose and approached him.

"Am I to understand, Madame Wylde, that you do not need this fellow's company?" said he.

"Out with him!" snarled Ann.

"Go out!" said Jaques.

Eph did not move.

"Go out, I say, *canaille*! go out!"

"I understand French," replied Eph, quietly. "Do not be too free with it. I might hear you."

"Are you going out?"

"Not yet. Don't be skeered, Miss Maggie, I won't hurt him."

Enraged by the coolness of the spy, Jaques caught him by the shoulders and tried to drag him to his feet. Eph sat quietly in his chair, without any apparent effort, while Jaques tugged and strained, making himself very red in the face, and all to no purpose. The spy sat like a rock, gazing up into the young Frenchman's face with an odd mixture of the comical and the serious in his eyes.

"Got most threw, stranger?" he said.

Jaques tugged again, and a smile began to deepen upon Maggie's lip.

"Stick like wax, don't I, stranger? Hard to move as the rock of Giberalter, ain't I? Try ag'in, now; mebbe I'll come soon."

Jaques tried again.

"That'll dew," said Eph. "Let go!"

"Leave the house, I say!"

"Take yer hands off me."

He did not obey, and Eph rose, took him about the waist with his long arms, and threw him to the other side of the room. He sprung up, foaming, with a knife in his hand.

"Put up the weepen!" shouted Eph, snorting like a roused war-horse. "Wimmin in the room! Put up yer weepen, I say. Ye claim to be a gentleman—don't draw a knife, or you'll git hurt."

Jaques never heeded him, but sprung on, whirling the knife over his head. Maggie screamed, thinking Eph in danger. But, making a single step, he caught the descending wrist in the grip of his long fingers. A single wrench, which almost dislocated the arm he grasped, caused the knife to drop to the floor. Catching the amazed Frenchman by the shoulders, he shook him as a terrier would a rat.

"Goll darn yew, w'at d'ye mean? Why, yew lettle, weak, hop-o'-my-thumb, ef I was to shut my hand on you, whar' would you be, you *flea*! Put me out of doors, will you? Not ef I hev' anythin' tew dew with it, yew 'tarnal sneak. I come from the colony whar' they raise *men*. Git eout!"

He gave him a twist, much in the manner in which a boy spins a top, and he went whirling off against the wall. Never, perhaps, had an officer in the service of France been so roughly handled. But his spirit was not yet broken, for he caught up a rifle which stood in the corner, and looked at the priming.

"Dog!" he cried, as he lifted it to his shoulder, "your life is in my hands!"

The spy had not thought to bring things to this desperate crisis, but he was not the man to shrink from the consequences of his own acts. His own rifle was out of his reach, and he folded his arms, looking death calmly in the face, as he answered the Frenchman:

"That's a lie! My life is in the hands of God. He may hev' made you the instrument to kill me, but ef he hev', you or I can't change it. And ef he ain't, yew can't kill me. Fire away; but ef yew miss, woe be unto yew!"

"I shall not miss," said Jaques. "You may have one chance. Beg for your life; down upon your knees."

"I kneel to God," answered Eph, still without fear, "because my heart tells me it's right; but I don't kneel to man, much less a cowardly Frenchman, who is less than a man. Stand out of the way, Miss Maggie!"

The girl had stolen behind Jaques to seize his arm, when the shout of the spy rung out. As he spoke, he doubled up his body like a ball, and leaped at the officer at the instant the gun was discharged. So sudden was the onset that the bullet did no more than graze the skin upon his shoulder. The next moment Jaques was borne down by the scout to the floor of the cabin. His throat was in the grasp of the hunter, and the starting eyeballs told of the strength of his vice-like grip. In his anger, Eph might have forgotten to loose his hold in time, but for the interposition of Maggie. At the first word of entreaty from her, he let go his hold, and allowed the discomfited hero to rise to his feet and shake the dust from his garments.

"I'll gin ye fair warnin', stranger, thet ef ye move hand or foot, I'll mount ye like a horse. I will so. I ain't none of yer kind to b'ar malice, but ye can't keep this up, and make fun out of it."

"I'll have your heart's blood for this!" hissed Jaques.

"In course, ef I let ye; but I won't. Now, yew keep still, or durned ef I don't tie yew so tight yew can't even peep. Old woman, don't you say a word! You set the durned sneak on me. Miss Maggie, I guess I'll be off. I won't take that meal here, as I am a little afraid it wouldn't taste good. Come here."

Maggie came close to him, and he whispered, "Be in the woods by the spring this arternoon. Come alone."

Maggie nodded, while the old woman looked on suspiciously, but said nothing.

The scout shouldered his rifle, took away the powder-flask and balls of Chattillon's weapon, cast a comical look at the group, and walked away.

He met Tom at the door, backed by a young black, nearly as short as himself.

"W'at de debble mek' all dis row?" asked Tom.

"Little dispute," said Eph, shortly.

"Brought little Dave, dat's my brudder, to help you. Sure you don't want us?"

"No," said Eph; "thank you. Take good care of your young mistress, boys, and if she is in trouble, try to get word to me."

CHAPTER V.

CHATTILLON'S WOOING.

JACQUES CHATTILLON had made up his mind to marry Maggie Wylde. He had never thought, for a moment, of the possibility of rejection, and when he left Fort William Henry, he was as gay a young lover as could be found in the United Provinces. A week spent in her society had made his case

more desperate than ever, and he determined to possess her at any hazard. But for some reason, he had never dared to broach the subject to her.

He spoke to the old lady, and found her very pliable. She liked the idea, as it had been a favorite project with her that her child should marry a man of her nation's blood. At his request, she said nothing about it to Maggie, but let events take their own course.

Maggie, at first, was pleased with his fluent conversation, and his brilliant descriptions of the wonders of far-off France and Italy; for he had traveled in these countries, and knew their attractions by heart. Some of his sophistries, however, did not agree with her creed, and she combated them strongly, generally gaining the victory; and, as their acquaintance ripened, perceiving that vanity and selfishness formed the chief basis of his character, she grew weary of him at last.

But he had determined to bring matters to a crisis; and, to her intense chagrin, attached himself to her on this particular afternoon, when she most desired to be alone, and would not be shaken off. She wished him at the antipodes, earnestly, half a dozen times that day, but, with provoking pertinacity, he would not see the cloud upon her face, and followed her down to the spring, when she took a pail, as a pretext, and started that way.

"I can not permit it," said he, taking the pail from her unwilling hand; "I shall bear you company. You were never framed to bear the hardships of this strange, wild life, *ma belle*. You shall carry no such burdens, if I can prevent it."

"I do not quarrel with fortune," said Maggie, coldly. "Each has a station appointed in life, and though mine is a lowly one, I am prouder to be a citizen of the brave *new world*, than to be a countess in the old—I am indeed."

"If you were a countess, you might change your mind."

"I am not a countess, and, unless I remove to Carolina, stand a poor chance of being one. Come, come, Master Chattillon, give me the pail. You are mocking at me, now, I can plainly see, and that I will not abide."

"Mocking!" cried he. "Upon my life, if you had your just deserts, you would be Empress of France."

"Your pardon; you say you are not mocking, and yet that

I deserve to be Empress of France! In good sooth, your fancy is a strange one, which can transport me from this humble station, in one short moment, to a throne!"

"You jest, and I am serious. A woman less fair than you is the wife of our monarch to-day. If beauty had its meed, you would take such a place."

"What is the matter with you, Monsieur Jaques? Do you not see that all this is impossible, even if I were what you are determined to make me? France! I hate France. She is cruel and proud; I am English, in spite of the French blood in my veins. I take it from my good English father, and I love his country."

"You do not know France," said Jaques, eagerly. "The hills and valleys are like none else in the wide world. The grape has a happier flavor, and the sunshine dwells forever on her slopes; do not speak against France."

"Why should I love it?"

They had reached the spring when she asked this question, and stood together on the brink of the little rivulet, which, in alternate bands of light and shade, went dancing down the slope, gurgling over the stones, and making strange music on its pebbly bed. She stooped down, and took a little water in the hollow of her hand, and just touched her lips with it. The beauty of her attitude at that moment hurried him on to his fate.

"Why should you love France, do you ask? Because I love it; because your love should be *mine*; because you must marry me, and make that France your home!"

He had her hand before she could speak, and was down upon his knees before her, covering it with kisses. She drew it hastily away, and looked at him in utter amazement.

"There is nothing that you can wish for which can not be granted. I am the son of a Count—heir to the title. Share with me the honor of my position."

"Do not go on," she said, with an appealing look. "You are wrong, you are very wrong. All this is nothing to me."

"Do not decide at once; take time—months, years; I can wait. Only consider; do nothing hastily."

"It is impossible."

"You say this in earnest?"

"I do."

He rose from his knees.

"You saved my life to-day. If you had not stopped him, that spy would have throttled me. Do you know this?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not let him kill me?"

She looked at him in silence.

"I say, why did you not let him kill me? It would have been better for us all if he had done so. Perhaps you can tell why you refused me. Perhaps I know it myself. It does not matter. My purpose is taken. I loved you, and I was willing to plead—but I am resolved to have you—willing or unwilling, you shall be mine."

He turned away as he spoke, his eyes gleaming fiercely under his heavy brows. Notwithstanding his threat, it was not a part of his design to carry it into immediate execution. Suddenly provoked to use threatening language, his ideas as to the manner in which the fair Maggie was to be coerced to become his wife were as yet quite indefinite. Vague notions of the power of Mother Ann and her willingness to aid him, may have floated through his brain—and perhaps the thought of carrying off his prize, in spite of herself, at some future time, flashed at the moment upon his mind. But, though he had, on the instant, undoubtedly resolved to "win and wear" this forest-flower, with or without her consent, yet the *modus operandi*—the time, the way and the means—were not yet determined.

He therefore turned to depart. But as his last glance parted from the lovely face which his soul coveted, the light seemed to vanish from his heart and blackness to take possession of it. Whatever of selfish love—and it was little else than selfish—he may have felt for the fair girl before him, it was in a moment transmuted into hate. The frenzy of thwarted passion possessed him. Rage, shame, mortification, that he, a peer of France, and as such, entitled to pay his *devoirs* to the highest in his native land—that he had knelt before this wild-flower of the western wilderness—had knelt and been rejected—the thought maddened him. A dim suspicion, also, that he had a rival, one who had been before him, and stolen away the heart which he sought, and thus

been the cause of his discomfiture, inflamed and intensified the pangs of humbled pride, and awakened a desire for vengeance.

On the instant his purpose changed—he resolved to carry her off then and there—a wild, impracticable purpose, which only could have entered a brain crazed with passion. Had his rival been near, the “method of his madness” might have been more definite and more clear. But no one was at hand save the immediate though innocent cause of his humiliation. She, at least, was within his reach, and could be made to feel some portion of the pain she had inflicted. He would carry her off, far from the lover for whom she had scorned him, and thus win a double revenge.

Turning quickly, he seized her by the arms. Surprised by this unexpected movement, she struggled to free herself from his grasp. The fierce light in his eyes filled her with terror. She screamed, but he covered her mouth with his hand, and endeavored to bear her away. She looked around for help, but no one approached. They were too far from the house for her voice to be heard. A look of despair came over her face, which was not lost upon her vindictive suitor. An exultant fire flashed in his eyes.

“You are mine!” he hissed, with his mouth close to her ear. “Ay, struggle, look frantic. I have you, and will repay you for your scorn.”

He lifted her in one arm, his hand still over her mouth, and started into the forest, heeding not, caring not, whither he went, intent only upon the anguish it caused her. Her terror was a salve to his wounded pride. He was still bearing her away, when, making a last desperate effort, she freed her voice and uttered a succession of piercing screams, resisting all attempts to cover her mouth again.

Maddened by her struggles and her screams, he struck her with his clenched hand to still her cries. She would not cease. He bore her back upon his knee, and seized her by the throat. The man was mad. Livid spots appeared upon his face, and he knew not how tightly he held her in his grasp. The last scream died in a hollow gurgle, and she was quiet enough.

But the alarm had already been given. The shrieks had been heard, and steps in the woods warned him that some one

was approaching. Drawing a pistol, he dropped the girl and sprung into the bushes and waited. In a moment Eph Peters came in sight, following the trail like a hound. He caught sight of the girl upon the ground, and uttered a cry, thinking her dead, for she was bleeding from the blows she had received, and had fainted. He ran forward, and raised her in his arms.

This was the opportunity waited for by Chattillon, and he raised the pistol, pointing it full at the head of the spy, who was bending over, intent on reviving the prostrate girl.

The pistol cracked !

Eph loosed his hold of Maggie, and fell back with a cry, while voices sounded from the woods around, attracted by the report. The murderer sprung from his hiding-place, glanced at his fallen enemy, stooped, and was raising the maiden from the earth, when he felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder. He turned hastily, and met the mocking gaze of Eph.

"Not dead yet," said that irrepressible individual. "Trouble you to drop that little gal. Do it easy, tew."

Chattillon was too much amazed to reply, and Eph knocked him down without dallying a moment. The coon-skin he wore was torn on the top, and the hair was red underneath. The bullet had broken the skin and grazed the bone, making the spy, to use his own phraseology, "so weak in the legs that he tumbled down." This, however, was one of Eph's fibs. The truth was, he had purposely adopted the Indian artifice of falling to the ground, as if shot, in order to throw his enemy off his guard. Of course, he did not fail to come to life again at the opportune moment.

Binding the Frenchman with his own belts, Eph whistled for Ronald, and again set about resuscitating Maggie. She revived at last with a gasp, and looked at the scout in speechless delight, covering his rough hand with kisses. He soothed her in his rough way, disclaiming any particular merit in saving her, and giving her into the hands of Ronald when he appeared.

They had heard the first scream when some distance away, and had hurried on as fast as they could. While hesitating at the spring, they heard her scream again. Eph had outrun the lover, and was rewarded for his superior speed by securing the benefit of the pistol-ball.

"It's best so," said he, whimsically. "My heave is so darned hard that a bullet more or less makes very little difference to it. Ef it had been you, now, you would had been killed. Is that Tom?"

"Yes."

"Send him here. I calculate you are both of you willin' to leave this skunk tew me and Tom. We'll give a good account of him, I'll bet you money. You take Miss Maggie back yew the house and let the witch know what he was a-dewin'. Jest look at her face! No, Ronald, yew git eout. Yew would be *tew* hard on *him*, even."

"What will you do with him?"

"Lace his hide with a hick'ry, I reckon. You go 'long. He's my pris'ner, I calculate. Here, Tom."

The negro, who had heard the cries of Maggie, came at his call.

"Wha' for mek all dis noise, Miss Maggie? Enty some-t'in' scar' ye?"

"I'll tell you what it is," said Eph. "You tew clear out, I tell you. Trust me with this pizon critter. Dang my buttons ef I don't give it to him. Git eout, I say; ain't he done enough? Tried to kill me three times, carried Miss Maggie off and hit her in the face; choked her tew, I reckon. Yew keep away, Ronald! yew shan't tech him, not while I'm here."

"Oh, Ronald," said Maggie, "set him at liberty. Make him promise never to approach me again while I am here, and let him go. I can forgive him for any thing he has done to me. I can indeed," pleaded Maggie.

"Neow jest look at that!" said Eph. "Didn't he carry you off?"

"Yes; I forgive him."

"Didn't he hit you in the face?"

"Yes; but he was mad, and I would scream when he told me not."

"Didn't he choke you? Durn him. Strike a woman—a pretty woman, mind—in the face with his fist! choke her to keep her quiet! you *can't* forgive that."

"I can, and do."

"Wal, you've got that right; but I can't do vi'lence to my

nat'ral feelings by dewin' the same. Whar' I was brung up, a man that would strike a gal wa'n't thought fit to live; almost too mean to kick; yes, tew mean for any thin'. Examine yourself, Eph Peters, and see if yew kin forgive him?

"Fustly, he tries to stick me with a knife. I twist his arm and make him drop it. I calculate that he shook about that time, almost as hard as Jim Jonson w'en he had the ager. I shook him; consekens, *that's* all squar'.

"Secondarily, he tried to shoot me, and I mounted him in three jerks of a deer's tail, and, I calculate, if you had not put your oar in, he would have had some little trouble in breathing. I choked him *hard*—that's all square.

"Thirdly. He took you off against your will. That was bad; that was very bad. That goes dead ag'inst him. Kick him a little, Tom."

"Es, Massa Eph, I do dat," replied Tom, suiting the action to the word.

"Tom," said Maggie.

"Es, Miss Maggie."

"Stop that."

"Cer'nly—course, if you say so. Likes to do it, dough," replied Tom, grinning down at the Frenchman, whose teeth were hard set as he glared at the darkey.

"Don't you look at me dat ar' way," cried Tom, "'cause I ain't going to stan' it; so dar' now."

"Shet up, Snowball," said Eph, "I ain't done; only got to thirldly. Now, then—

"Fourthly. Miss Maggie cries out, as soon as she gets her pretty mouth free, as any woman who has a pretty mouth would do under the same circumstances. She hollers out, and then what did yew dew? You unnat'ral skunk, what did yew dew then? You up with your fist and hit her in the face. That's what you did, and I ain't goin' tew stand it, ef she is. It ain't nater for Eph Peters to let a feller off who has acted like an unnat'ral skunk. Kick him three or four times, Tom."

Tom obeyed, though Maggie tried to interpose.

"Don't, little gal," said the scout. "It hurts my feelin's to see you take the part of him. He ain't no account, only as

he has meddled with our camp. To continner, as the preacher says :

"Fifthly, and wustly. It makes my blood bile just to think of it. W'en you seen that she wouldn't stop for blows, nor curses, you choked her. Choked a woman, and the prettiest woman in the Mohawk kentry ! Do you think, you pesky hound, that you hev' any call to live any longer ? Miss Maggie, don't you meddle ; don't you put in. I'll lace his jacket with a hick'ry. That's our justice here on the frontier. When a man is too mean even for hangin', we lace his hide with hick'ries. Stands to reason they wouldn't grow so thick round about the banks of the streams, ef a man couldn't find a use for 'em."

"Mr. Peters," said Maggie.

"Don't you *mister* me ! My name is Eph ! Ef you want to be more than common polite, call me Ephraim, and I'll answer tew it. But I won't have no misters."

Maggie laughed.

"Stands to reason, that one don't want no such vain titles here in the forest. What would Hendrick have said (he's gone, poor fellow, and a brave man died that time), ef you called him *mister*. Keep that for the towns."

"Just as you please, Ephraim," said Maggie. "I shall never forget what you have done for me to-day as long as I have breath."

"Enough of that," cried Eph. "I ain't so sure but I might be tempted to do a great deal more for ye, to hear you say that so sweetly. But I don't do sich things for pay. 'Tain't much I done, anyway, so don't you say no more about it."

"But what will you do with your prisoner ?"

"Lace him, by jingo !"

"Why don't you let him go ? You will only make him your enemy."

"I don't like this 'ere letting a feller go when you have him fast. It is double labor. Ketch a man, an' then let him go without toll ! That's double labor, I tell ye. I won't let him go."

"Not if I ask it, Ephraim ?"

"Don't you ask it," said the scout, perceptibly wavering

"Don't you do it. I might say no, and that would make us both feel bad. Don't you go to beggin' for a feller that hit yew in the face an' choked you, and cut up all kinds of rusty. 'Tain't right, 'tain't proper, that he should git off that way."

"But I *am* going to ask, Ephraim, and I know you won't refuse."

"Say yew know I *can't*; yew might as well while yew are at it. I always was a soft-hearted goslin'; never sed no tew a woman but once, and she had a nose shaped like a spike, about five inches long, by jimini. Dew yew want me to let the critter go?"

"Yes, Ephraim."

"By Jinks—I didn't mean to swear, but, darn it all, a man must dew it sometimes. Tom, untie that dirty critter. I wish I hed a pair of gloves, boy, an' I'd lend 'em tew ye. Gosh all blunderbuss; this yer riles me awful—this does. Pinch him a little as you untie him, Tom. Don't be very 'tic'lar ef you take up a good big piece of the skin every time, 'bout as large as a shillin'."

"Don't do any thing of the kind, Tom," said Maggie.

From the contortions and grimaces of the prisoner's face, while being untied, Ronald was inclined to believe that Tom obeyed the injunction of the scout, rather than that of Maggie. He was a long time at the work, and made continual mistakes, taking hold of the wrong end of the strap, and drawing it tighter, instead of loosening it, in a manner which made the victim writhe angrily in his bonds. The task was accomplished after a long time, and the prisoner rose to his feet, shaking off the straps as he did so, and stretching his limbs painfully.

"Good hitch, that of mine," said Eph.

"Whose prisoner am I?" demanded Jaques.

"Mine," said Peters.

"What do you intend to do with me?"

"Nothing whatever. I wish to ask yew a few questions, and if you answer them at once, I will let yew go. But if yew don't answer them right, yew will be hitched up ag'in till yew dew. Look at this here gun. Yew don't often see sick a gun as that. Colonel Munroe give it to me, and it'll carry furder than any piece in the Colonies. Don't yew try to git

away, for if yew dew, you'll git hurt. Miss Maggie, you go away tew one side, and take the captain and Tom with yew. No, let Tom stay here."

"You don't mean to use violent measures, Ephraim?" pleaded Maggie.

"You clear out. Stands tew reason I know my own business better than any gal in these United Provinces. What's vi'lent measvre? Ef he don't speak, I'll hitch him up ag'in, and take him down to Edward. My word for it, he don't want to go to General Webb."

"Come away, Maggie," said Ronald. "I have much to say to you. It is useless to try to move Eph any further out of his course to-day. There is no *man* in the army who could have induced him to give way as much as he has to-day to you. If you are not proud of your conquest, you do not understand its value."

Jaques glared at them malevolently as they walked aside. Eph sat down on a log, holding his rifle, to the casual looker-on, carelessly in hand. But in reality it was in such a position that he could have brought it into service at a moment's notice. He waited some time, apparently in no hurry to begin his questions, measuring the resistant qualities of the man before him, who now folded his arms and faced his persecutor, as he looked upon the scout to be.

"What do you want?" he demanded at last, as the scout still sat regarding him.

"In a hurry?" queried Eph.

"Yes."

"You needn't be. 'Time for all things,' saith the preacher. What brcught you out into this section?"

"My own affairs."

"Tom?"

"Es, sah."

"Tie him up again."

Tom hastened to obey; but the Frenchman, seeing that it would not do for him to be too obstinate, yielded, saying:

"I will answer your questions. Keep that fellow away"

"Thankee," said Tom. "I a *feller*, am I? I owes you a punt for dat."

"Let him alone, Tom. Now, sir, answer my question."

"I came to visit my friend, Madame Wylde."

"Why did she wish to see you?"

"Why do you wish to know?"

"'Cause the old woman is no good; French to the backbone, the old witch; not a bit like her gal, who is an angel on 'arth. Answer my question."

"I will not."

"Tie him up, Tom."

"'Es, *sah*!" replied Tom, advancing with the straps.

Again the prisoner yielded, and Tom fell back.

"Madame Wylde wishes to return to the Canadas, in which country she was born."

"Yes; what else?"

"She wanted my advice how to remove, and asked me to come up to see her before I returned to Canada."

"Where did you see her?"

"At William Henry."

"When she came down there, a few weeks ago, with Tom?"

"Yes."

"Did you return with her?"

"Yes."

"Yew didn't leave the fort with her. How was that, sir?"

"They waited for me on the river. I left next morning and accompanied her up the stream."

"Then you have been here three weeks?"

"Yes."

"Where will you go when you leave here?"

"To Canada."

"That's too wide. What place?"

"Crown Point."

"Very likely; did Hubert Moran escape in the battle with Johnson?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"At Crown Point."

"Then you go there to meet him?"

"Why not? I am his lieutenant."

"I know Hubert Moran. He is not such a man as you. A brave man, not overscrupulous as tew what he hes to help

him, but a pretty good man in the main. Tell him when you meet him that I thank him for the horses."

"He intends to thank you when he meets you, which he hopes to do in person some day."

"He is very kind. Tell him I will visit him at his camp within the year."

"Do you promise?" cried the young man, eagerly, looking at the other.

"I promise," replied Eph, coolly, "to meet him in his own camp, within the year, if he camps during that time upon our soil, and perhaps I will do it if he stays in Canada."

"Mere bravado."

"Yew think so?"

"I do."

"You will find your mistake. Eph Peters never made a promise yet which he failed to perform, when it was in his power tew dew it. Yew keep your word threw life as well, and I doubt not your life will be honest. But to my questions. Where did you mean to carry Miss Maggie?"

"To Crown Point."

"Alone, through the woods?"

"I did."

"Have you given up the idea?"

"For the present."

"You still intend to follow her?"

"I do."

"In that case, you have an enemy; one who will cross you in every way, and tew to one get the better of yew in the long run."

"And this enemy?"

"Is myself."

The officer made a gesture of derision, which in no wise moved the spy, who sat holding his rifle quietly.

"My questions are done," said he. "Unless you have something to say, you may go now."

"You mean to set me at liberty, then?"

"Of course. It's all her work. Don't thank me, for I wouldn't do it of my own free will. Far from it. Ef I had my way, as I said, I should have tied you up and given you a taste of our hick'ry. Your crime wasn't a common one, not by any means."

"I have nothing to thank you for, as you say, and we are enemies to the death, since you have even *thought* of such degradation for me. As for our black friend here, I think you kicked me, did you not?"

"'Es, *sah*!" replied Tom, promptly.

"For that, I shall some day roast you at a slow fire, if I have my way."

"Thankee ag'in, Frenchee. S'pose you won't do it till you *hev'* your own way den. I did kick; didn't kick half hard, 'nuff. Wish de Lord I'd kicked you harder, I does—oh, gracious, yes!"

"I wish to say a few words to your friends yonder," said Jaques, turning away from the negro. "Shall I go to them or will you call them?"

He sent Tom to them and they came up. Before the Frenchman began, the spy said that if Maggie did not wish to hold any conversation with Jaques, he should not speak. As she expressed herself quite willing to hear what he had to say, he thus addressed her:

"I do not wish you to think, Mademoiselle Marguerite, that I at all repent what I have done, since you goaded me to it by your own injustice and scorn of me. I am sorry I struck you. I was mad when I tried to injure you and stop your cries. For that, because it was not the act of a gentleman, I beg your pardon a thousand times."

"I have forgiven that," said Maggie.

"You've done more'n I would, then," grumbled the spy.

"But I have not by any means given over my purpose, as I expressed it at the place of our late unfortunate interview. You have still the key to my heart in your hands. You might still win me to do any thing, good or evil. But since I see nothing but scorn on your lips, you lead me to do evil."

"I wish to hear no more," cried Maggie.

"Shet up, yew," put in Eph, as the Frenchman was about to continue. "She shan't be bothered."

Chattillon, thus summarily silenced, turned his attention to Ronald, on whom he vented a few bitter words, which were answered with sarcasm. A brief dialogue followed, angrily sustained on the part of the officer, who was inflamed beyond endurance by the mocking replies of Eph and Ronald.

Threats of what he would do half revealed his purpose to the acute spy, who led him on by artful recriminations to utter things he would have kept to himself if his blood had been cooler.

He saw the smile on the face of Eph, after a while, and checked himself in the midst of a spicy sentence, and looked hard at his enemy.

"You are too much for me in craft, my horse-stealing friend. I shall not continue this dialogue. You and I shall meet again, when I can be angry and not lose by it. Now, it is a winning card to you. Mademoiselle Marguerite, I give you good-day. We, too, shall meet, one other time, at least."

He cast a look of mingled hate and contempt about the little circle, took his hunting-pouch from the hand of the spy, slung his rifle over his shoulder, and pressed on toward Canada, never looking back upon the trail.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MESSAGE.

DURING the winter, nothing was heard of Jaques Chatillon. Events had been thickening about the frontier. The vacancy caused by the death of the Baron Dieskau had been filled by a man eminently the superior of any officer in the colonies, with the exception of Wolfe. This able leader had marked the year by a descent upon the important post at Oswego, which fell into his hands, after a brave defense. It was the old story, on the part of the commanding General—a refusal to see the danger, until it was too late.

The frontier was disturbed, as usual before and after an inroad of this kind, by various bands of savages of all tribes, who roamed through this region, perpetrating fearful outrages upon the defenseless inhabitants.

Ann Wylde was not in much fear. The tribes who knew her would not harm her, and those who did not know her, the Hurons of the Lakes, seldom came down so low in the

Mohawk country, having a wholesome dread of its rightful owners.

One day two Indians came into the cabin, having crossed the river on a raft. Both were dusty and travel-stained, and their moccasins were worn. The first was a man somewhat beyond the middle age, with a sharp, searching eye, which never rested long upon any one object, but wandered from one to another, with a keen, inquisitive gaze.

Maggie was alone in the cabin, and hardly knew what to do with her strange visitors, who seated themselves in the corner and watched her motions about the little cabin. She knew enough of Indian costume to be very certain that the savages did not belong to any tribe with which she was acquainted.

They spoke in a dialect which she understood, having learned it from her mother, the *patois* of the Canadas. She answered them in the same, much to their surprise. Calling in her mother, who neglected no opportunity of making friends among the tribes, the old woman at once entered into conversation with them.

"Have my brothers traveled far?"

"From the city of the great French war-chief."

"Quebec?"

"Yes," said the spokesman. "Is our mother a child of France?"

"She is a Huron," replied Mother Ann, quietly.

"Ugh!" said the warrior, with a gesture of surprise. "How can she be a Huron, when her skin is white?"

"My mother was a Huron, and she was the wife of a French war-chief."

"The warrior is old," said the spokesman again, "and his memory is long. Perhaps she can speak the name of her mother."

"Wah-ta-ha."

"Wah-ta-ha was the child of a chief. She went away when the warrior was a pappoose. But he has heard them speak of it in the councils. My mother's words are good, if she can show the tokens which her mother, as a Huron, must have given her."

The old woman bared her skinny arm and disclosed, near

the elbow, tattooed with the juice of a plant known to the Indians, the figure of a fish, the emblem of her branch of the Huron nation.

"My mother is right," said the Huron, "and the heart of Me-to-ne is very glad that it is so. Let us smoke with her."

The woman produced a pipe, and they smoked with her as with a warrior, a thing seldom done by an Indian. Soon after, they rose and left the house, first leaving a paper in the hand of Maggie.

She opened it and read :

"I am still alive, and will yet claim my revenge. My hate is the same.

"JAQUES CHATTILLON."

She gave this note to her mother, who read it quietly, and putting it into the fire without a word, took her staff, and went out into the forest. Soon after, Tom came in, in considerable trepidation. He had seen a number of Indians concealed in the bushes, who did not act as any of the friendly Indians had done before. Maggie did not know what to do, but called in the negroes, five in number, and sent Tom out to scout. He came back soon after, with the report that the savages had camped upon the spot where they were first seen, some fourteen in number, and that "Ole Missis was with them," sitting by the fire and "making herself at home."

Not at all understanding this, and knowing that her mother would not go to the savages except for some purpose of her own, she began preparing their meal, watched by the negroes like children as she did so.

"De Lord !" said little Dave, "why ole missee out dar wid dem Injins, Miss Maggie ?"

"She will tell me when she comes back, Dave."

"But s'pose dey no let her come back, eh ?"

"There is no fear of that ; she went among them of her own accord, and they will not attempt to detain her."

Dave shook his head doubtfully.

"Wish I's sure of dat," said he. "Ain't, dough. S'pose brudder Sam and I go out an fro' dem Injins into de tree-tops."

"Dave !"

"Kin do it, Miss Maggie. No—tell you wot we *mus'* d-

ketch 'em all an' fro' 'em ober de ribber, so dey can't git back. No hurt dey, 'tall."

"Why will you say such things, Dave? You would run at the first sight of an Indian, and you know you would."

"One Injin; course I'd run from *one* Injin. W'at's de use ob fi'tin' *one* Injin. But wud I run from free, four, hundred? No, I guess not. Ketch 'em by de ha'r and fro' 'em into de ri'ber; dat's what I do wid dem."

"Le's us go out, missee," said Tom. "Spec' I's jist spilin' fur sumfin to do. I ketch dem Injins and fro' 'em to Little Dave and he fro' 'em into de ribber. Jes' mek' fourteen fro's; do it in fourteen seconds."

"Tom, you are as bad as Dave."

"What I done now, Miss Maggie?"

"You tell such whoppers; you are afraid of Indians."

"I ain't," said Tom, promptly. "Lick a hull tribe. Scorn to lick less dan a tribe."

"That's another, Tom."

"No 'tain't; you stop slandering of me all de time. I kin do it ebery time."

"Tell you what I done one day, Miss Maggie," put in little Dave, who never missed an opportunity for a lie. "I was goin' down froo' de woods affer de cows, long down by de falls—you know de place. Brudder Sam caught a fish dar' dat weighed most two t'ousand pounds; awful fish, dat, now min' I tells you. Wal, w'en I got dar' I seen seventy-five Injins drivin' our cows away. Miss Maggie, I walked into dem Injins an' piled 'em up on one anudder, an' put a big rock on top ob dem, an' far as I know, dey's dar' still."

This proclivity of the two blacks for telling tremendous stories of their prowess was a source of much sport to Maggie, who, finding it impossible to check it, as any thing like doubt of the truth of their statements was sure to elicit a still more tremendous yarn, suffered them to run on 'till they were out of breath.

The old lady came in before nightfall, and told them why she had visited the savages. They were braves of her own nation, and had accompanied the two who had brought the message from Jaques Chattillon. They reported an immense gathering of troops in the Montreal district, with the avowed

intention of taking the English forts on the frontier. They had been sent in advance by Chattillon, who wished the girl to understand that he had not by any means forgotten her, but would attend to her case when the time came. These Indians had been sent forward with instructions to remain in the neighborhood until the arrival of the French, when they were to convey Mother Ann and Maggie down the river to the French army.

"But, mother—I do not wish—"

"Silence, girl! I have long waited for this opportunity, and now I will take advantage of it. I have lived away from my kindred long enough. Since you, by your foolish rashness, have lost the love of Jaques, you have only yourself to blame if he takes harsh measures to bend you to his will."

"Mother, if I had never seen Ronald Mannering, I should not marry Jaques Chattillon. He showed his bad nature too plainly that day, in the broil with the scout, Peters, who spared him again and again after he had attempted his life."

"Be that as it may, prepare yourself to go down the river in a few weeks. Montcalm is coming, and he will nobly avenge the death of the old baron."

"I shall not leave my home."

"You have no option, even if you dared set yourself against your mother's will. The Indians will compel you to go."

"And will you allow it?"

"Certainly; why should I not, when it furthers my own designs? You will go when the time comes, quietly if you will, forcibly if you make it necessary."

"Are you a mother?"

"You will find it so, if you attempt to set your will against mine. I shall send word to-morrow by an Indian runner to Jaques Chattillon that you repent bitterly your conduct, and will meet him at Fort William Henry, there to become his wife."

"Send no such word; I will die first."

"You will do nothing of the kind. The runner goes to-morrow, as I said."

"You send your own message then."

"What!"

"No word of mine goes to Jaques Chattillon. Whatever

you have to say, I have nothing to do with it. Duty to you does not require that I should sacrifice myself to a monster. In any thing else you may command me, but in this you can not."

Her mother gave her a malevolent glance, and left the room. As soon as the door closed upon her, the unreasoning black opened again:

"Dar', Miss Maggie; now min' I tole you. Wouldn't let little Dave go out and fro' dem into de ribber. Dat's your own fault, an' you may talk all you min' to," cried Tom.

"S'pose we's gwine to be toted way up norf, whar' it frizzes all de y'ar roun'? No, sar, I won't."

Quick to plan and execute, Maggie called Tom to her side.

"Go out into the opening, and wait 'here until I come to you."

Tom obeyed without question. Soon after, taking a pail, she left the house and went down toward the spring. Here she met Tom.

"Do you know the way to Fort Henry, Tom?"

"Spects I does," said the negro. "W'at den?"

"Could you go there, if you tried?"

"Wish I's dar' now. W'at de debble I want to go up norf for? I *don't* want; no place for me."

"Where is your canoe?"

"Hid in 'de bushes down dar'; kep' it 'way from little Dave. He t'ief dat canoe free four times for go jack-fishin'. Wha' for him tek' my canoe? Better he take he own canoe all de time."

"Tom," she said, quietly, "if you take that canoe and run away to-night, I shall not be at all angry."

Tom looked at her with staring eyes.

"Only you had better go to Fort William Henry. When you reach the fort, tell Captain Mannering that I am in danger and need help. Tell him the number of the savages. No, I will write it."

She took out her tablets and wrote a hasty statement of her condition and needs, tore out the leaf, and gave it to the negro.

"You want Tom to go?" questioned the negro. "'Cause he won't run away and leave you unless you send him away."

"Yes, you must go."

They went back to the house. That night, to the surprise (?) of Maggie, and the openly expressed rage of Ann, Tom took his canoe and escaped down the river. Little Dave was inconsolable.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MARCH.

A WEEK passed by slowly. Two of the savages had started after Tom, but as they had no canoe, and as water leaves no trail, the chase was worse than useless. One day a runner came from the east and communicated with Me-to-ne. He came at once to the cabin of Ann Wylde, and informed her that they were ready to march in the morning.

Maggie had given up all opposition to her mother, and they set out at daybreak. All the stock upon the place, cattle and horses, were taken with the band, who appeared to be careless of consequences. What had happened to make them thus fearless in the Mohawk country, Maggie, who knew their dread of their ancient enemies, could not divine. But they shot game wherever they chose, kindled fires, and otherwise acted in a manner not at all becoming warriors on the war path.

They left the line of the Mohawk, after crossing the river and struck into the country toward Lake George. After traveling two days, they pitched a camp among the mountains, and went into it, apparently determined to stay some time.

Ann, seeing that her daughter gave her no trouble, became more companionable, and volunteered some information in regard to their future course, which, she told her, depended much upon the movements of the French, the band with whom they were traveling forming a part of the French army. That they should, in all probability, stay where they were until the coming of the main body, when they would attach themselves to it, and return with the first party to Canada.

Maggie, who was gifted with a large share of her mother's

indomitable spirit, secretly determined that she would never see Canada in that way, and began to look about her for the means of escape. She had no doubt that Ronald would do all in his power to save her, but whether he could get away from the army at this time, when a struggle was anticipated with Montcalm, was doubtful. Tom might never reach the camp; a thousand things might happen to prevent her receiving aid from others, and she resolved to try her own skill at scouting on the first opportunity.

In a conversation with her mother, she obtained information as to the situation. They were on the hills to the west of Lake George, south of Crown Point, and some ten miles from William Henry.

Ann Wylde knew the nature of her spirited daughter so well, that she kept her strictly watched. When she was not under her own eye, some one of the savages was ever on the alert.

On the third day of the encampment, Dave came to Maggie, and stood leaning against the tree under which she sat, looking out upon the clear water of the lake.

"Whar' you s'pose Tom be now?" queried he, looking down at his mistress.

"I hope he got safe to William Henry. I sent him away."

"W'at you send him away for?"

"To get help. Speak lower; mother is looking at us. I am afraid she heard you."

"W'at you send Tom 'way for? If you just luff dat Tom here, tell you w'at, we'd tuk all dem red niggers out dar' in de lake, tie a big stone to dere necks, and hab 'em drowned, ebbery one ob dem. Dat's so; 'deed we would."

"Dave, is this a time to talk in that way?"

"Course it is; kin do it, too. Jes' you say de word, an' I goes an' frows dem all ober de rock."

"Dave, I won't have that kind of talk any more. What I want to do is to get away. Now set your wise wits to work, and tell me how to do it."

"Git right up and walk away."

"They are not foolish enough to let me do that. Dave, you are a dreadful liar. Couldn't you make up a good one to get me away from here?"

"You git right up and go away. Dey try to stop you, I ketch dem and tie dem to de trees, and hang ole missee up on a limb by her clo'es. Dat's w'at I'll do."

"Now don't be a fool, Dave. Sit down here. Look down the lake—just as far down as you can see. Watch that point of land running out into the water. Do you see any thing on the water a little way from the point?"

"Yaas; dat's a log."

"It isn't; my eyes are better than yours. It is a canoe."

"So 'tis," replied Dave. "Knowed it was a canoe, all de time. Said it was a log, jus' to fool you."

"Can you make out whether it is in motion or not?"

"Yaas; comin' dis way. See de paddles dip."

"How many do you make out in it. Answer low, I am watching mother."

"Free. Dar', dey ain't comin' no further dis way, I tell you. Dey goes to de bank. Can't see dem no more."

Ann, who had been watching them with jealous eyes, fearing they might hatch up some mischief together, came forward and sat down near by.

"When do we go on?" asked Maggie.

"Not at all; Montcalm comes to-morrow."

"Where will he go?"

"How should I know his plans? The English forts will fall, like Oswego, before the great marquis. Oh, he is a soldier of soldiers, a man of men. I love all who fight for the lilies of France."

"Do you love these savages?"

"Why not?—are they not of my blood?"

"Would you have me herd with such degraded creatures because I have a little of their blood in my veins?"

"It is not forced upon you. Only say you will be the wife of Jaques Chattillon, and you need fear nothing from them."

"I fear nothing now," replied the girl, quite calmly. "They dare not injure me. Do I not know that they are employed by Chattillon?"

"How do you know it?"

"The message was brought by Me-to-ne, and he commands the band. Would you yield so tamely to have your stock driven away by these robbers if you did not know who they

were? It is useless to try to deceive me, mother; Jaques Chattillon is at the bottom of it all."

"And if he is, girl? You would say nothing against him for that?"

"What, to tear me from my home! To force me against my will into a strange place? Mother, have you any heart? The man struck me in the face, choked me to keep me quiet, would have killed me, I verily believe, if the brave scout had not saved me; and yet, you think him good enough for my husband. You were not wont to take insult so tamely."

"Doubtless he never meant to harm you, but wished to scare you."

"Scare me! I should think so. Mother, he bent me back across his knee and choked me. I cried out first, and he struck me in the face with his clenched hand, and when that failed to quiet me, he took me by the throat."

"You belie him, girl," cried the old woman, sharply, "you belie him. You are set against him by that meddling dog, Ronald Mannering. I curse him, as I cursed his father. I hate him, as I still hate *him*, for he hath stolen my daughter's heart from me. A plague strike him, body and bones! May he never know a happy hour! Do not try to stay me, girl; I *will* curse my fill. I have never told you how I hate him. I tell you now that I would sooner see you dead at my feet—yea, dead in your coffin at my feet, than wedded to one of that accursed brood. These degraded beings, whom you affect to despise, are better in my eyes than one who has Mannering's blood in his veins."

Maggie looked at her with dilated eyes. Dave shook his head and rose slowly to go away, glancing back at the vicious old woman, much in the manner in which he regarded a hungry wolf which might spring upon him at any moment.

"Mother," said Maggie, "you have no cause for this."

"I have the best cause. A better cause may you never have to hate any one, than I to hate the family of Ronald Mannering."

The sound of a bugle, wound cheerfully and well, rung through the woods as she spoke. She sprung to her feet and listened. It was repeated three times and Ann looked relieved.

"That is the signal, Marguerite. In a few moments the man I have chosen for your husband will be here. See that you treat him kindly."

"I shall treat him as he deserves."

"Be that as it may, you are in his hands, and it is with him to compel you, if need be, to obey him."

"Does he come alone?"

"No; Hubert Moran is with him."

"He is the better of the two. I would sooner have him for my guard than Jaques."

"He does not love you. Hark, here they come."

The clatter of hoofs sounded up the rocky path leading to the natural fortress they had chosen, and the two partisan leaders, well known to the Indians, passed the guard and stood beside the lake. Moran looked about the place with a satisfied expression.

"By the saints, Jaques," was his first exclamation, "that dog Me-to-ne has a good idea of a defensible position. Nothing short of artillery could oust a strong party from this location. What a lovely ambush could be laid for an enemy in yonder ravine. But, hark at me, babbling in this manner, and leaving unsaluted the most beautiful girl in these Colonies. Cousin Marguerite, I kiss your hand, and humbly ask your pardon for first taking a soldier's view of the position. Though, in faith, he is no soldier who will not bow to female loveliness, as I do. Good-morrow, Cousin Annie."

"Drop the French. Ann will do for me," said the woman. "I am glad to see you, Hubert."

"I am *serry* to see you, Hubert," said Maggie, "for you come as my enemy."

"Never as your enemy," replied Moran—"you do me wrong. You will think better of me, some day," he continued, seeing her hesitate. "In the mean time, have you no greeting for my comrade, Jaques Chattillon, who has ridden two score English miles this day to see you?"

"When I parted last with Monsieur Chattillon," replied Maggie, "we parted as enemies. I can not be the first to yield."

"No enemy if you love me, Marguerite," cried Chattillon.

"I do not love you, and you know it."

"You know the result then."

"I told you, Jaques Chattillon," said Moran, decisively "when you spoke to me in the forest, that if you sought the love of Marguerite, it must be by fair and honorable means. You shall not do her a wrong; I swear it."

"And who put you on your high horse with regard to my daughter, Hubert Moran?" cried the old woman, turning angrily upon the partisan. "Do I fear that he should wrong her? Am I not her mother, and have I not a right to do what I will with my own?"

"Certainly; no one has a better right, to a certain extent. But beyond that you can not go. You think Jaques right?"

"Yes."

"I say no more for the present. Nevertheless, I must have some talk with my pretty cousin about the matter."

"Oh, Cousin Hubert," cried Maggie, throwing herself at his feet, "pity me—aid me! They would force me to marry him—a man whom I detest, who insulted me, who struck me in the face and strangled me. Do not believe them. Aid me."

"What is this?" cried Moran, sharply, smiting his sword-hilt till it rung upon the scabbard with a loud clang. "If you have done this, Jaques Chattillon, I will post you through the army as a coward."

"Be careful, Hubert," said Jaques, taking a single step in advance. "Do you charge me with cowardice?"

"Answer me first. Did you strike her? No matter what the provocation. She could give you none to justify that outrage."

"What right have you to question me?" demanded Jaques, quailing a little, for the lips of Moran were drawn in like those of a fierce animal, and his white teeth showed plainly.

"The right of a *man*!" thundered Moran. "You struck her?"

"I did."

"You put your fingers to her throat?"

"I did."

Hubert lifted his gloved hand from the hilt of his sword and struck the Frenchman in the mouth. Then stepping back two paces, he drew his sword.

"Do not fight, Jaques Chattillon," cried Ann Wylde, as the blade of the young man flew from its scabbard. "He entices you to your death."

"I shall not kill him," said Moran, "but he shall have a lesson in politeness, which he will not soon forget. Stand aside, woman. Cousin Maggie, do not be alarmed."

The combat was of brief duration. In a few moments Moran ran his opponent through the sword-arm, rendering it impossible for him to hold his weapon. He dropped it with a stifled curse of pain and mortification.

"That is for the insult to my cousin," said the partisan. "Let me hear that you have laid the weight of a finger upon her in anger again and I will kill you like a dog. Madame Wylde, I would wish to know what you intend to do with my fair cousin. If your persecution of her is to be continued, I must take her under my own protection."

"Thanks, Cousin Hubert," sobbed Maggie. "Your kindness I shall never forget."

"A trifling service, little Maggie. Would I not do as much for any woman, and shall I not for my own blood?"

"Your kindness to me shall also be requited," said Chattillon.

"You had better let Madame Ann bind up your arm," replied Moran, sarcastically. "At present you are not a very dangerous enemy."

"Fool," muttered Ann, as she bound up the arm, "why would you anger him? Why must you begin upon the girl the moment you alighted from your horse? Could you not wait until this meddling fool had left us?"

"Have I not waited for long months, with all this venom in my heart? I tell you that I could wait no longer."

"You see the result."

"S'death! I will make him rue it before the night is over. Can we not part them, somehow?"

The partisan had given his arm to the girl, and they were walking on the shore of the lake, engaged in earnest conversation.

"By Saint Denis!" continued Chattillon, "would it not make any man rave to have his best friend turn upon him in a moment? It was the blow I gave her which ruined all."

Herbert would not have been so squeamish but for that. But when I struck her, I was mad ; I knew not what I did."

"Something must be done," said the old woman, glancing stealthily at the two by the lake-shore. "Who commands these savages?"

"They are under my orders."

"Are they true?"

"As steel."

"What is to hinder our taking care of his excellency to-night, when the girl is asleep?"

"Ha!"

"Do you not see?"

"He is my superior officer. If he ever comes back and accuses me, I shall be broken for it."

"Why should he come back?"

He started.

"He is in your way," hissed the woman. "Take him out of it, and do not hesitate as to the means. There is nothing for it but to get help from your men. As you say, it is dangerous for him to come back. See that he comes back no more!"

"You don't mean—"

"*You* need not do it. Leave it all to Me-to-ne, and say to him that I am in danger from him ; that will be enough."

"Shall it be done to-night?"

"That were best. Turn your arm so that I can tie the bandage ;—that will do. Come aside and we will talk it over. If we are not equal in cunning to that couple yonder, we deserve to fail."

Moran was, as we have said, a strange character—a mixture of good and evil qualities. An active and unscrupulous partisan, he had been the leader of many a savage inroad ; but when the chivalrous feelings of his nature were aroused, he was behind no gentleman of France in courteous deeds. The prayers of his beautiful cousin had not been lost upon him, and he had not hesitated to draw his sword upon his sworn friend, and give him a lesson in politeness.

"Good sooth, fair cousin," he was saying, as the wounded man and the old woman went aside for conference, "this lover of yours, it seems to me, should have drawn his sword upon

Jaques, and given him the lesson I have been forced to give."

"Monsieur Chattillon was bound when he came up. He was the prisoner of the scout, Peters. You would not have him strike a prisoner?"

"No; I heard nothing of that. He was right, after all, for Jaques did not wear his sword. That knave who took him, Peters, shall account to me yet for the horses he has taken from me—fairly enough, I must own, but still they were mine. He sold one of them to Jaques, by proxy, for fifty guineas. What think you of that?—a common hack as you would wish to see, got easily enough, sold for that sum."

"He is a brave man, cousin."

"*Par bleu!* I admire the rascal myself, in spite of what he has done; I can't help it; he performs these exploits with the coolest effrontery possible. Imagine him, if you can, walking into the tent of Baron Dieskau, who would have hung him to the nearest limb had he known his errand, telling him a story about Jaques and myself waiting for our horses at the Médecine Spring. He said I was lame, and could not walk, too, the knave."

Maggie smiled.

"I know him well enough to be certain that he would tell such a story, and never change a muscle of his face, though he told it to the Emperor of France. He is absolutely without fear."

"I may well believe it, from what I have myself heard of him. The knave has given Jaques a promise that he will meet me some time within the year, in my own camp. He will keep his word, I verily believe. But in regard to your own state—your situation is such that I shall take it on myself to protect you from your mother and from Jaques. I shall get hard words and hard looks enough, but I am used to it, and take them for what they are worth."

"What will you do?"

"I shall inform your mother that I will not see you wronged by her or by Jaques Chattillon. If she persists, I shall take you on my saddle-bow, carry you to the English camp, and give you into the care of our worshipful enemy, Captain Manering, with whom I had a short passage at arms at Dieskau's

battle. Nay, do not blush ; he is a brave soldier, and I doubt not will guard you well."

"Can I trust you with a secret, cousin?"

"Yes, I think so."

"I have no doubt that Captain Mannering is following us, even now."

"Ah!"

"I have seen a boat upon the lake to-day, with three persons in it, whom I take to be friends."

"I hope they may be; for then I shall give you into their hands and return to the army, and ask the marquis to give me a new officer ; I am tired of Jaques."

In a little cave, some three miles down the lake, the craft which had attracted the attention of Maggie lay safely moored, fastened by a thong of buckskin to a long root. It was one of the wooden canoes sometimes used in these regions, dignified by the name of "dug-out," from the fact that they were hollowed from the trunk of a pine tree, after the manner of that famous historical character, Robinson Crusoe. The dug-out in question bore the marks of recent labor with fire and hatchet, and had evidently been constructed on the spur of the moment, for instant use.

Tom lay in the canoe, looking indolently skyward, and whittling away at a pine-stick in his hand. Ronald sat upon the bank above him, handling his rifle uneasily, and evidently much discomposed. The black, not at all joining in his bad humor, whistled placidly, turning his large eyes toward his white friend, from time to time.

"Wha' be Eph gone, Marse Ronald?" he asked, after a while, suspending his whittling to ask the question.

"He wishes to find out who it is that has built a fire upon the bank yonder."

"How far off, t'ink?"

"Two or three miles."

"Come back to-night?"

"He must come soon ; I have waited over two hours, and he promised not to delay after he had found out who they were."

"Here come some one now," said Tom.

Ronald sprung to his feet, cocking his rifle as he did so, but the voice of the spy restrained him.

"Keerful, keerful, lad. Never spring your lock in that way. The red-skins know the sound as far as they can hear it."

"What news, man?" cried Ronald, eagerly. "Speak a once."

"Found 'em," said Eph, shortly.

"By the fire yonder?"

"Yes; and I seen something that did my heart good, besides. I snaked up to the fire as near as I dared, and found it was on the other side of the ridge, on the lake-shore. I crawled up the ledge and took a peep in. The camp was a small one, only fourteen in all. But I'd heard a bugle a little while before, an' just as I got to the top of the ledge, and c'u'd see the camp-fire, and mek' out that Miss Maggie was thar', and the old woman, two fellers kem' ridin' past my perch, an' who do you think?—that durned skunk, as you wouldn't let me tech with a hick'ry, and Hubert Moran. The minit I seen Hubert Moran, I felt better, for I knew that he wouldn't let them hurt a woman. They dismounted, and I c'u'd see that they held some talk with Miss Maggie, and that Moran kept his hand on his sword. Pooty soon she fell down at his feet and took his hand. He lifted her up and begun to talk with Jaques Chattillon. I wasn't s'prised when the blow in the face kem' from Moran—"

"What! he struck his friend?"

"Squar' in the mouth—a back-hand blow 'at nearly leveled him. They had a bout with swords on the spot, and Jaques got run through the arm or shoulder; jest where, I couldn't see, and they parted. Then I kem' away."

"That looks well, Eph."

"Don't it, though? Now I shan't be half so skeery about going into the camp. Stands to reason he won't see harm come to her."

"Of course not. He is a brave man, and I shall thank him for this some day."

"I took his horses," said Eph, "and I'm sorry for it now, since he done this. Ef they had only belonged to that skunk of a Chattillon, now, I should get up and crow on the spot—crow loud and h'arty. I'll make it even some time, ef I can."

"What kind of a place are they in, Eph? Can we get near it easily?"

"I think so. The canoe will be the thing. They ain't got sich a thing to their names as a canoe, and ef we ken git the gal into it, good-by, Jaques Chattillon. What dew yew say to that?"

"It seems best."

"We'll wait till dark. Then I'll show you a trick worth a dozen or'nary ones. Tell you what, cappen, Moran must look out for himself to-night."

"Why so?"

"Don't you see that this durned old, spiteful woman, and that cub of a Frenchman, ain't goin' to have him stick his finger in their pie, without so much as sayin' a word for themselves? I seen them go off whisperin' together, while Moran was a-talkin' with Maggie down by the shore, and they mean no good. Durn them; their two faces were like chalk, they was so awful mad. And when two sich tempers as theirs gits mad, look out for squalls, mind I tell you. They will try some trick on him to-night, ef they live, that will fix him out, ef he don't take care."

"I do not think they would try to injure him."

"They are bad enough for any thin'!" cried Eph. "But never you mind. Ef any thin' is done, I am goin' to have a finger in it, and will spile the pie, jest as like as not. Wait till night."

CHAPTER VIII.

MORAN'S DANGER.

THE partisan retired to rest, fully determined to stand by Maggie in the contest with her mother. The consciousness of a good action performed gave him quiet rest, and he slept well, never dreaming how much trouble was brewing against him. That the two would oppose him, he was very certain; but the thought that they would attempt to destroy him never crossed his mind.

Jaques had also retired to rest, and was, to all appearance, slumbering; but, after lying an hour, he arose and issued from the tent. He found the chief of the Hurons nodding over a fire, and sat down by his side, lighting a pipe as he did so.

"Is my white brother in pain?" asked the Indian. "Surely the white chief was wrong when he wounded his brother with the long knife."

"You looked on and saw it done," replied the young Frenchman. "Is the chief the friend of his white brother?"

"Let him try me; thy white brother is too fast. When he fought with the white chief, the blows came so quickly that his red friends could do nothing; and they have often seen the young white chiefs fight each other with long knives, and shake hands when it is done, in the great wigwam at Montreal. Surely they thought that you would shake hands to-day."

"The chief is getting old," said Jaques, "and his blood is growing cold. Did he not see him strike me in the face?"

"The chief has a heart yet, and he saw the blow. Why did not my young brother bury the steel in his heart?"

"Because he is more skilled in the use of the sword than I."

"The short guns of my white brother were in his belt; he should have taken them out and fired a bullet at the 'Swaying Oak.'"

"That would have been murder."

"But the white men do so," persisted the savage. "They do so very often, and I have seen them. It was at a house where they give fire-water for pieces of wampum. One of them struck the other, as you have been struck to-day. He struck him back, and they went out together into the woods. There came two other men who talked together much, while the two who were to fight said not a word. I stood in the shadow of the trees and saw one of the two who talked much, walk so many steps,"—holding up his hands, with all the fingers extended,—"and then one of those who said nothing was placed where he started to walk, and the other where he stopped, looking at each other. The other man who talked much, put a short gun in the hand of one who talked not at all: and the other who talked much, put another short gun

In the hands of the other who talked not at all. Then those who talked much went away, and one of them said a word. They lifted the short guns; he said another word, they looked at each other; he said another word, and they fired the short guns, and one was killed. And the others who talked much went away, and took with them the one who would never talk again. And I saw them in the house where they sell fire-water for wampum, and the one who talked not at all that day, talked as much as any. Why may not my brother and the 'Swaying Oak' do so?"

Jaques could not help smiling at this naïve account of the duel which he had witnessed. He went at once to work upon the crude ideas of the Indian.

"The daughter of Wah-ta-ha has spoken to me, and she is very angry with the 'Swaying Oak.'"

"The daughter of Wah-ta-ha is very great médecine. The heart of the Huron is big toward the old mother. He will do much for her, because she is the child of one of the tribe of the Wyandots. Why should they not help one another?"

"The 'Swaying Oak' has sung harsh songs in the ears of the daughter of the 'Broken Reed' (Ann), and she is very sad, for she loves her child. She wishes to make her the wife of a chief, but the girl will not have it so. A bad Manitou has spoken to the 'Swaying Oak,' and he has whispered it in the ears of the young squaw. She is a bad child, and will not obey her mother, who is old."

Obedience to parents in the young, and especially among the squaws, is a law in the Indian nations; and a frown contracted the brow of the chief.

"Beat the evil spirit out of her with rods," said he, angrily.

As Jaques did not wish the anger of the chief to turn upon Maggie, he hastened to avert it.

"The bad spirit does not dwell in her bosom," answered he, quickly, "but in that of the 'Swaying Oak,' and it passes from him into her ears. If the 'Swaying Oak' were not here, she would do well."

"Bid him depart."

"He will not do it; and if he would, the evil spirit would remain by her, hidden in the rocks and trees. There is only

one way in which we may drive away this bad spirit from our camp."

"And does my brother know it?"

"Yes; the spirit is such, that it can only be harmed with fire. It is the same spirit which turned the blade of the 'Swaying Oak' against me, and the mind of the maiden toward him. We must bind him to an oak, and draw a circle about him. Within this circle we must lay fagots of dry wood and pile them as high as his head. Perhaps the spirit, which is strong within him, will make him cry out that he will not speak to the maiden any more. We must not heed him, for he will return when he no longer fears the fire."

"Let my brother go on," said the chief, lifting a brand for his pipe.

"When we have piled the fagots about him, we must set them on fire. If he is a bad man, he will cry out, and struggle, as women would do. If he cries out, we shall know that he is a wicked man, and that the devil is in him still. But when he is quiet, we must scatter the brands, for then the spirit will have gone out of him."

The Indian bowed in silence. It seemed to him no more than proper that he should be the instrument to aid in driving the bad spirit out of the 'Swaying Oak,' since his malevolence was doing injury to the Broken Reed.

"Shall we take all the warriors to do this?" said he.

"No," replied Jaques; "six besides yourself. I will stay here."

"Where is the Swaying Oak?"

Jaques pointed to the tent, and told him in what part his couch lay.

The chief said no more but quietly aroused six of his companions—powerful fellows, upon whom he could depend—and they approached the tent in a body, stepping like cats, for they knew that the partisan was sharp-eared, and that any unusual noise about his bed would be heard. Me-to-ne halted them at the tent-door and looked in.

The partisan lay upon a couch of skins, in an attitude which showed to good advantage his noble figure. His naked sword lay within reach of his hand. This was not from any suspicion of danger, but his wild life made him cautious, and he was very careful in regard to his arms.

The savage, with a wholesome fear of the "long knife" and the power of Moran to use it well, determined to secure this first. Beckoning to two tall savages, who followed him stealthily, he crept forward in the gloom, feebly relieved by a weak taper, burning in the corner.

The sword lay upon the side nearest the wall, and the Indian, kneeling upon one knee, reached over to seize it. He had it in his grasp, and was drawing it toward him, when some loosened plate upon the hilt jingled a little, and the partisan opened his eyes.

A moment passed before he could make out the reason of so strange a spectacle. Then his brown hand darted at the escaping Indian, and grasped him by the throat, with a gripe which nothing could unloose. In an instant the eyes of the savage were starting from their sockets, his tongue protruded, and he was at the point of suffocation, when the other savages rushed in. Flinging Me-to-ne back with a force which nearly deprived him of life, Moran leaped up, and grasping his sword, stood at bay.

"Back, you dogs," he cried. "Do you dare attack Hubert Moran in his tent? He dies who advances a step."

But they were determined, and closed round him with desperate courage. One fell, pierced through and through, in the first onset, and the others recoiled a little. Sweeping the sword-point from side to side, the officer cleared a little space about him, and took breath.

Me-to-ne had now recovered from the shock of his fall, and, being no coward, turned angrily upon his men and rated them in no set terms for giving back. He was about to rush in with his hatchet, when the voice of Jaques restrained him.

He had come to the tent-door, holding a rifle in his hand, which he pointed at the breast of Moran, raising it steadily, in spite of his wounded arm.

"Yield, Hubert."

"You have done this?"

"I have. Yield."

Moran looked about him, and saw the uselessness of resistance. Flinging down his sword in anger, he suffered himself to be bound without a word of complaint, while Jaques looked on.

"I think you are fast, Monsieur Capitaine," said he. "It is now my turn. Ah, you shall rue the hour you struck me."

"Why am I bound?"

"You will find out soon enough. Say good-night to the world, for you will never see another sunrise."

"Coward!"

"Good words, Monsieur Capitaine. Make your peace with all men, for you die within the hour."

"Jaques Chattillon, do you mean to kill me?"

"I! Oh no, not at all. The Indians think you are bewitched, and are going to smoke the devil out of you. They will have a hard time doing that. What a pity, now, that the fair Marguerite must lose her bold champion so early in the encounter."

"You have enticed the savages to this."

"Again you wrong me, Monsieur Capitaine. The savages, acute reasoners, see that a person who turns against his best friend, as you have done to-day, must be laboring under the power of some bad spirit. They are going to fight the devil with fire. Give you good-night, my good leader. I shall tell a fine story to Montcalm, which shall set you right in his eyes. You shall die nobly, give you my honor; you shall die surrounded by a horde of savages, upon honor."

"Leave me."

"Certainly. Me-to-ne, you will of course take him out of the camp and finish him. Do not listen to any nonsense, but be sure you smoke him out entirely before you let him go."

The savages immediately laid hands upon the "Swaying Oak," and dragged him away to the death they had prepared for him. In a beautiful glade, a quarter of a mile from the camp, they placed torches in the trees, bound their prisoner, and left him under guard, while they prepared for the savage ceremony.

A young ash tree, about a foot in diameter, was stripped of its lower branches and bark. A circle was drawn on the ground about the tree in accordance with the wishes of Jaques, and the prisoner was tied to the bared tree.

The savages now passed in dismal procession about it, and chanted a mournful chorus. The partisan looked this way and that, not hoping to escape, but with the look of a man who is about to die, and who is not prepared. The savage

eye of the chief turned upon him from time to time, with a glance in which no pity could be seen. The strangling bout in the tent had not by any means improved a temper at all times easily roused.

They set about collecting dried fagots by moonlight, and piled them high about the prisoner. When they had risen to his breast, he beckoned to Me-to-ne, with his unbound hand, expressing a wish to speak with him.

The Indian came up slowly, and stood before the prisoner. His countenance was distorted by passion, and his eyes glared defiance at his enemy.

"To-night," said he, "when the chief came into the wigwam of the Swaying Oak, he only meant to take him and try him with fire. If he had been pure, he would have escaped, so said his white friend. But the Swaying Oak was much mad, he killed Wa-ne-to, the friend of the Hurons, who was loved in all the Wyandot lodges. Then we became angry. We knew that the bad spirit in his breast would stay there until it was consumed. We will build our fires close, and the Swaying Oak will die."

"The Swaying Oak has been kind to the children of the the Huron nation."

"When the bad spirit is not in him. He led the warriors against the great wigwam of the Yengees, when the wise chief, Dieskau, was slain. We were sorry for him, for he was a brave man. Many of our warriors fell, because we were told that the Yengees had no big thunder at the wigwam."

"Your own scouts said that."

"It matters not. We have said the warrior must die. Let him not make many words about it. It is all in vain."

"You have determined to kill me?"

"The shade of the fallen Wa-ne-to waits on the shore of the happy river, and will not pass over until he is sure that we have avenged him. Shall the Hurons go back to their tribe, and say that Wa-ne-to is dead, and they had his murderer in their hands and let him go free? The squaws would spit upon us, the boys shoot arrows at us, if we do so."

"Go on, then, in God's name; but since I must die, I would like to die like a sollier of France. Let some kind friend shoot me through the head."

"But to this request the Indian gave no heed. Speaking to his followers, the savage approached with a flaming torch, and began to light the pile. Before it had kindled, a pistol cracked close to the partisan's ear, and he saw his red friend topple over, with a loud yell. Falling on the torch, it was extinguished, and only one dim light remained.

The chief seized the extinguished brand, lighted it again, and whirled it about his head. In the circle of brilliant light, he saw that the fagots were scattered, and that the partisan had a hatchet in his hands. He cursed his own stupidity for not tying the hands of his prisoner, and lifting his hatchet, hurled it at his head.

The movement was so rapid that the partisan had scarcely time to dodge the weapon, which flew past him, just grazing his hair. Had he retained his first position, he would have been a dead man.

The friend who had fired the pistol now severed the cords which bound Moran to the tree, and as the chief sprung forward with the knife, the two met in deadly conflict.

At the same moment, two other savages fell by as many pistol-shots, leaving a man to each of the rescue-party. For Eph Peters had fired the first shot, and Ronald the next. They had been prowling about the camp when the partisan was taken, and seeing the state of affairs, had sent Tom to take charge of the canoe, instructing him to paddle out from the shore, and come in again when they showed two torches, one above another. They then followed the band who carried away the partisan, and aided him at the right moment.

The wandering, eventful life of Eph Peters had given him muscles like iron, and when he closed with the savage he had chosen to encounter, that person knew his doom. He was a brawny fellow, of great power, who fought for his life as only he can fight who knows that he has but his own arm upon which to depend. For some moments they swayed to and fro in a close grapple, their hot breath upon each other's cheeks. When they went down, in spite of his exertions the spy was uppermost, and his hand upon the Indian's throat.

The left hand of the savage was free, and found its way to the knife-hilt of his adversary, as he had lost his own.

But before he could draw the knife, the terrible hand of the scout loosed its grip for a moment upon the throat, and dashed full into the face of the Indian with blinding force. Involuntarily he threw up his left hand to avoid a second blow, thus losing his hold of the knife. Eph instantly caught it up, and buried it to the hilt in the brawny breast. The limbs relaxed, the head fell back, and he was dead.

Shaking off his stiffening hand, Eph rose and looked about him. The adversary of Ronald had fallen with a sword wound in the breast. But the struggle between the partisan and his enemy had not yet ended.

Eph picked up the hatchet and approached the spot, seen dimly by the torch which flickered on the ground. The two had struggled to their feet. Eph caught up the torch, kindled it again, and took a view of the two. Moran was wounded, and feebly attempting to hold his adversary with his wounded arm. But he broke away, and ran into the woods at full speed.

Shouting to the others to stay where they were, the scout followed close upon his heels. The Indian ran well, but the man who followed him was the swiftest runner in the colony. The Indian heard the beat of his pursuer's feet close at hand, and knew that he was doomed. The tomahawk was lifted, there was a sudden cry, and the spy paced slowly back, holding the bloody hatchet in his strong right hand.

The men who had met as enemies on bloody battle-fields shook hands in the midst of that dense wilderness.

"I swore to hang you, Sir Spy," said Moran. "I should be right loth to keep my word."

"I swore to visit you in your camp," replied Eph. "I shall keep my word."

"If you do, and I catch you, by our Lady, I will let you go free."

"Hang me if you catch me, Captain Moran, or I shall make you trouble."

"I hope you found my horses to your liking?"

"Very good horses. I sold them for fancy prices," replied Eph, coolly. "Captain Mannering, this is Captain Moran; you have heard of him."

"I have," replied Mannering, offering his hand, which was

cordially grasped by Moran. "We crossed swords at the battle of William Henry."

"And I have heard of you in another way, captain."

"Ah, indeed?"

"From a mutual friend, Mademoiselle Marguerite Wylde."

Mannering flushed a little. "I am glad Miss Maggie thinks me worthy of mention. How did you fall into the hands of these fellows?"

"Solely on her account. I found some fault with her treatment at the hands of my ensign, Jaques Chattillon, who received the cut in the right arm. He set the Indians on me, telling them that I had a bad spirit in me, and they must burn it out. But the story will keep. I take it that you mean to rescue her."

"Yes; how many men remain in your camp?"

"Seven Indians and Jaques Chattillon. I may as well add the old woman, for she is devil enough to fight."

"We are four against nine, then."

"Four?"

"Yes; we have a negro on the lake, who will fight. The question is, can we get into the camp in such a way that they can't harm Maggie? That must be done somehow."

Eph looked at the dead bodies at his feet, whistling softly. Some idea was working through his noddle, and it came out at last.

"Strip off your outside garments, and case yourselves in these. Here, Ronald, yew take this one; he is jest your size. Durn it all, they expect these ere fellers back, and it won't do to disapp'int them altogether. When we get to the camp, every one pick a man, and let him have it. When it is over, go in with your pistols and swords. I am good for two of the varmints. The first thing yew dew, loosen little Dave, an' give him a club. Tom won't have a chance in it at all."

Acting immediately upon this suggestion, they were soon busily engaged in effecting the change of garments, and in a short time were rigged out in the toggery of the deceased savages. Eph went back for the belt and head-dress of Me-to-ne, and placed the plumes so that they hung partly over his face.

"It wouldn't dew any other time," said he, "but they won't

suspect, as they look for these chaps back again at once. Foller me ; tread in my steps, single file. Toe out and step light. Let me dew the talkin'."

They walked into the camp in the coolest manner possible, and found the company quietly awaiting the return of the chief and his men. Their arms were stacked upon one side of the fire, and the three men seized these at once, while Eph called out to them in the Indian tongue that "the first man who stirred would be shot in his tracks."

"My brothers are surprised," said Moran, throwing off his head-dress, "that I am not dead. But I live to thank you. 'Bend the Bow,' are you against me?"

"No," replied the savage addressed, who had not joined in his capture.

"Come out to us, then."

He obeyed.

This question was repeated to others, with a like result, until only two men remained by the side of Jaques, who saw with rage and fear that the partisan had been saved, and that he was in danger of taking his place. He looked about him, like a rat at bay. His weapons were in the hands of the enemy, and they were now seven to three. He sprung forward to escape, but Ronald was before him, and leveled him by a blow of his fist.

He was bound and carried into one of the tents. The whole had been effected so quietly, that when they shewed the lights for Tom to come in, he refused to do it for some time, believing that they were prisoners, and the savages trying to trick him.

They all remained wakeful that night, even to Maggie, who had seen her only protector dragged bound into the forest, with feelings better imagined than described. His return, accompanied by her lover, was so unlooked-for, that she sunk down half fainting, breathing to heaven a prayer of fervent thanksgiving for his preservation. Presently she came out of the tent, and sat with her lover by one of the fires until morning.

As dawn approached, Ann Wylde came forth, looking older by twenty years. She had been outwitted in her schemes, by the providence of God. Throughout the day

she was very ill. They placed her in the canoe, and the two negroes paddled her up the lake to William Henry.

The whole party followed on the next day, with the exception of the Indians and Moran, who did not care to visit the fort yet. By the advice of the partisan they did not stop long at William Henry, but continued their course to Fort Edward. Here old Ann Wilde died, and was buried outside the fort, in the soldiers' burying-ground. She was regretted by few besides her gentle daughter, who wept for her as a child should.

Ronald returned to William Henry, and Maggie went on to Albany, under the escort of Eph Peters, who obtained leave of absence for that purpose.

He was not long gone, and returned in time for the closing scenes. The scouts had brought intelligence that Montcalm was approaching, and in a few days he sat down before the gates, and sent a flag to demand the surrender of the fort to the army under his command. Munroe, who commanded the fort, refused to comply.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASSACRE AT WILLIAM HENRY. CONCLUSION

THERE are some scenes in history, over which we would willingly draw a veil. But the people demand to know these things, as a part of our early history. Among the many deeds of inhumanity, which history blushes to record, is that which occurred at Fort William Henry. The foolishness which first planted the forts in such an exposed position, and then left them without adequate means of defense, can not be excused.

The army with which the French marquis entered the colony was one of the largest he ever commanded—no less than twelve thousand men of all classes. To oppose these, Munroe had three thousand, all told. He demanded aid from his superior, General Webb, then stationed at Fort Edward,

only fifteen miles away. The message was borne by a young Indian, who had acquired some reputation as a runner.

On the second day of the siege, a flag came in with a singular request. The marquis wanted to see Captain Mannering, and sent a note from Captain Moran. The note was to the effect that the marquis wanted him to give evidence on the part of Captain Moran against Jaques Chattillon. The bearer of the flag, Captain DeMorne, was to remain in the fort, as a hostage for his safe return.

Ronald laid the matter before Colonel Munroe, who told him to do as he pleased, but advised him to go.

He decided to do so, and put himself under the protection of the French aide, who had accompanied the flag.

He was met by Hubert Moran just inside the barriers, who relieved the aide of his charge, and conducted him to the Marquis of Montcalm.

That great leader was seated upon a camp-stool, listening to the report of an officer. He looked up at the entrance of the two officers, and responded to the greeting of Moran courteously.

"Have you been successful, Hubert?" he said.

"My lord marquis," replied the partisan, "he is here. Allow me to present to your favorable notice, Captain Mannering."

"You are very welcome," said Montcalm, addressing Ronald. "You were doubtless surprised at receiving such a request from an enemy; but, unfortunately, you hold information which might make or mar the fortune of a young officer of mine, who is accused of bad conduct by my good friend, Captain Hubert Moran."

"Against whom, if I may ask?"

"Ensign Jaques Chattillon, a count of the empire, since his father died some days ago."

"Sire," said Mannering, after a moment's hesitation, "I know the man, and am very loth to have any thing to say for or against him. You will understand me better when I say we are sworn enemies, and that if we meet, it must be to cross swords. If I say any thing, I may be misinterpreted for what I must say will bear hard upon him, and I do not like to appear in this way against my enemy."

"I understand your scruples, my dear sir, and they do you honor. Still, I would have you appear as a witness at the court-martial now sitting upon his case."

"Sire, since you wish it, though much against my inclination, I shall not refuse to comply. Will it occupy much of my time?"

"It would be ungenerous to deprive Colonel Munroe of the services of so efficient an officer for any great length of time," replied the marquis. "No, we will have your evidence as soon as possible, and let you return at once to your duty."

They left the tent together, and went into another near at hand. Here they found the court-martial assembled, waiting only the coming of the marquis. All rose as he entered, and saluted. He returned the salute with an easy grace, which sat well upon him, and took his place upon a raised seat at one end of the *marquée*. A hush fell upon the court as he spoke:

"Mr. Secretary, why is this court-martial convened?"

The advocate rose:

"To try Ensign Jaques Chattillon, Count of Aumerle, upon charges preferred by Captain Hubert Moran."

"Read the specifications."

"*First*: Of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. It is charged against Ensign Chattillon, Count of Aumerle, that, by his own confession, he insulted, struck in the face, and attempted to strangle, a lady, living in the Mohawk Country, Mademoiselle Marguerite Wylde. The accuser is Captain Moran.

"*Second*: Of conspiracy against his superior officer. It is charged against the said Ensign Chattillon, Count of Aumerle, that, on the banks of this lake, a few miles from this spot, he did conspire against the life of his superior officer, Captain Hubert Moran, by enticing certain Indians of the Huron tribe, now dead, to burn him at the stake. The accuser is Captain Moran."

"Is the prisoner in court?"

"My lord, he is under guard."

"Let him be brought before us."

There was a stir on the outside of the tent, and Jaques appeared, led in between two tall grenadiers, who never took their eyes from him.

The marquis rose, and made the charge against him in his usual determined tones, and asked what he had to plead.

"My lord," said he, "I see men here prepared to swear away my honor, who are my personal enemies. Am I to be condemned in this way?"

"You are to be tried first," replied the marquis, sternly. "The judgment will come after. The man who accuses you is honorable. Every thing which can be brought forward to prove that he accuses you unjustly will be recorded. Are you guilty or not guilty to the first charge?"

"My lord—"

"Make your plea!"

"Not guilty."

"The second charge. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

"Mr. Secretary, he enters a plea of not guilty to both charges. Record that plea and call the witnesses of the accuser."

A cloud of French officers now came forward to speak of the mission of the captain and lieutenant to the South, and their return, still bearing friendly relations to each other. Ronald was examined, and told what occurred at the cabin on the river. The attempted abduction of Maggie, and her statement in regard to abuse at the hands of the Frenchman. A shiver of indignation ran through the court at the statement, and many glances were cast toward the prisoner, who, haggard and savage looking, returned their angry looks in kind. The evidence closed upon the first charge with the testimony of Captain Moran, who more than corroborated the story of Ronald, and left a bad impression against the prisoner.

The second charge was now brought forward, and witnesses examined. The testimony was soon taken, and immediately the court was cleared for consultation. There could be but one conclusion from the facts elicited, and the prisoner was brought back to hear the sentence of the court.

"Ensign Jaques Chattillon, Count of Aumerle, the court have consulted upon the evidence, and find you guilty of both specifications. Have you any thing to say?"

Jaques stepped forward a single pace, and spoke in a loud ringing tone, rising at times almost to a shriek :

"You have found me guilty, you! A count of the empire, of conduct unbecoming a gentleman! You dare to do it! Yes, I have something to say. You try me by the aid of two sworn enemies. I spit upon your verdict. I laugh it to scorn."

"Are you done?"

"Until I hear the sentence, yes."

"The sentence of the court is, that you be dismissed dishonorably from the army, after being borne through it from end to end upon a mule, with 'poltroon' printed upon your back, and with your face to the animal's tail. You will then be driven out of the lines of the army, to go where you may."

Never, perhaps, upon any human face, was such a war of hellish passion portrayed, as upon that of Jaques Chattillon. He gasped for breath, and clutched at the air, as one who has received a sudden blow.

Suddenly, his eye fell upon Moran, standing apart and looking at him with an expression of mingled scorn and triumph. At this sight, the mad passion of his heart boiled over. He sprung away from his two guards, and drawing a double-barreled pistol from a concealed pocket, fired one charge full upon the breast of the partisan. He reeled backward, falling into the arms of Ronald, who caught him as he fell.

"Keep back," said the madman, menacing the guards with his pistol. "I have a few words to say, and then you may have me. I might kill you, Captain Mannering, but I hardly feel toward you as I do toward the dog you hold in your arms. Good-by all. Comrades, I am going to my own country, by my own conveyance. Good marquis, I shall not ride your mule."

"Seize him!" shouted Montcalm.

"Ha! ha!" he cried, putting the pistol to his head, "thus I thwart you."

The pistol cracked, just as the hand of one of the grenadiers was laid upon his shoulder, and he fell, almost without a struggle, dead on the floor of the marqu e.

"Take him out, there, guards," cried the marquis. "Attend to Moran. Back, there, give him air. How is it with thee, my Hubert?"

"All well, my lord. He was a trifle hurried, and only managed to break my collar-bone. It won't take long for me to get round again."

"That is well, Hubert. How now, soldier? Is he dead?"

"Dead, my lord."

"Let it pass. He has lived long enough to die thus. Captain De Sayle, see thou return with Captain Mannering and bring my aide, who was left a hostage. A few words with you first, my dear captain."

They left the tent after sending a surgeon to Hubert. At the barriers they paused, and the marquis, laying his hand impressively upon the arm of his young companion, said:

"You will not make use of any thing you have seen to our hurt, captain."

"No, sire. I have no reason."

"Thanks; your colonel is still determined to hold out?"

"Yes, sire. By my advice, he will do so. We shall have help soon."

"Ah! From Fort Edward?"

"Undoubtedly."

"You will never get it."

"And why, if I may ask?"

"My dear captain, do the English ever send help in time?"

Ronald was silent, for he knew the harsh criticism was a true one. They parted at the outer barrier, Ronald being accompanied by Captain De Sayle. The aide was given up, and the gates closed.

That day Eph came in. He had been to Edward, and had stolen through the lines of the enemy in disguise. He brought no news of any coming help.

They waited some days, and the Indian runner they had expected was due. About the middle of the day, a flag came from Montcalm. The bearer was Captain De Sayle, and to their horror, he was accompanied by the Indian runner.

Munroe met him on the parade and received the cruel message of Webb. The brave man turned aside into his quarters, and read with tears in his eyes the advice to surrender from one who should have sent him three thousand men instead.

He sent out for the runner.

"What did Webb say to you?"

"Nothing, only no have men."

"Why did he not send them?"

"Got dem, but he 'fraid."

"Why do you think that?"

"Send Put out, ole *Put*, dey call him, wid him *Rangers*. Come little way, and Webb called dem back."

"How came you to fall into the hands of the French?"

"No get 'way, somehow."

"And he sent you in with this villainous message. Infernal politeness on his part. You may go. Call in the French flag, orderly."

Captain De Sayle came in at once, and delivered his message—another demand for the surrender of the fort.

"We caught your messenger, colonel, and he brought good news to us. The marquis thinks you can do no better than to surrender."

"Go to him, and say I desire an hour to consider."

"It is granted. He commissioned me to grant any reasonable request for time."

The Frenchman left the fort, and in a few days, after all hope was lost, the surrender was made. The generosity of the marquis was shown in the terms he granted to the vanquished. The officers and soldiers were to march out, under the colors they had so nobly defended. The pledge taken by the soldiers was, that they should not engage in war with France for a term of eighteen months.

The Indians under the command of Montcalm had looked for great plunder as the fruit of this capture, and were much disappointed when they heard the result of the treaty. Yet they agreed to the terms, and would have kept them, but for the folly of the English themselves. Montcalm, desirous of keeping faith with the English, refused his allies rum in order to preserve his influence over them. But the English furnished them with drink that night. Their own foolishness, then, was in fault, more than the act of Montcalm.

Many have endeavored to fix the obloquy of this transaction entirely upon the French commander. But history, fairly considered, proves that he acted as well as he could, under the circumstances. He only erred, in showing too much

consideration for his savage allies; in placing his zeal for his emperor before his humanity.

The morning of the day came, the darkest day in the records of colonial history. The Indians, maddened by drink, roamed about the field, snatching from the hands of the soldiers whatever pleased their savage fancies. These men, desirous of conciliating them, yielded readily, and even suffered their arms to be taken from their hands sooner than arouse their passions. Emboldened by this, they continued their outrages, and at last came to violence.

A mother, anxious for the health of her child, refused to give up the shawl in which it was wrapped, the gaudy colors of which had awakened the cupidity of the savage who had held by Jaques Chattillon in the night upon the lake shore. He tore the shrieking infant from her arms as the price of the gift. Then she offered every thing she had, but in vain. He killed the innocent thing before her very eyes, pealing out his savage war-cry.

This was the signal. The shout was repeated from a hundred throats. Others came together at the cry, and fell upon the stragglers who were following the main body of soldiery out of the fort.

Montcalm and his officers did all they could to allay their fury. Moran killed one savage with his own hands, and saved a woman whom he was about to tomahawk. In the confusion, this act of the partisan was not noticed, or he would probably have fallen a victim to the rage of the Hurons. The English soldiery, not daring to resist, lest all should be sacrificed, could only look on in silent horror. Mannering, far away from the principal scene of slaughter, yet saw enough to make his blood boil with rage.

The disorderly column pressed on through the woods, looking back from time to time as man after man dropped under the weapons of the red fiends who hung upon their flanks and made the woods ring with their screams of derision—shaking gory scalps in the faces of husbands and fathers, who could only groan, not daring to lift a hand against the murderers.

The retreat became a flight, and the disorderly remnant of that broken force found shelter within the walls of Edward,

where Webb had ensconced himself safely, leaving the veteran Munroe to his fate. It is reported that the gallant Putnam wept when he passed over the bloody ground, and saw the bodies of the unfortunates who had perished.

Mannering was promoted soon after this affair, for his good conduct at Dieskau's battle. He received the brevet of major, and soon after a commission in that rank, and joined Abercrombie in his disastrous attempt on Crown Point.

He afterward went with one portion of the army into Canada, but remained upon garrison duty in Montreal when Wolfe took Quebec. So he missed the glory of that enterprise.

Maggie found a home with the parents of Ronald until his return from the famous campaign in the north. The next spring he resigned his commission, and they were married, settling near Albany. The faithful slaves, Tom and Dave, followed their young mistress, and were cared for in their old age.

Hubert Moran clung to the fortunes of the "Great Marquis" until he found a soldier's grave upon the "Plains of Abraham." About this time he received a fortune at the hands of an old uncle, who remembered that he had some such scapegrace nephew, who had done honor to the family name as a soldier, and made him a rich man. Moran wrote a whimsical letter to Ronald upon his marriage, and sent a present to the bride. Soon after he went to France, but they heard from him by letter for many years.

Eph Peters kept his word to Moran in regard to visiting him in his camp, during the siege of Quebec. How he did it, it is not the purpose of this chronicle to relate. When he had achieved the task, he sent a note to the partisan acquainting him with the fact.

In good time the scout took to himself a wife, of Massachusetts blood, and settled down on a farm not far from his former officer, and a great friendship grew up between them, which was continued among their children for many years.

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